WITH ROGERS ON THE FRONTIER

J·M·OXLEY

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With Rogers on the Frontier

"I AM SETH ALLEN FROM MASSACHUSETTS."

WITH ROGERS ON THE FRONTIER

A Story of 1756

BY

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With Four Illustrations by F. J. DEVITT

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WITH ROGERS ON THE FRONTIER

CHAPTER I

ENGLISH AGAINST FRENCH

THE great conflict between England and France for supremacy upon the North American continent was drawing near its final stage. It had been waged for more than a century with varying fortunes, and over a vast extent of territory. The sea-girt province of Acadia in the extreme east, and the rich valley of the Ohio in the far west had alike been the scene of bloody encounters, and now the combatants were coming to close grips in that picturesque and beautiful portion of New York State where the twin lakes Champlain and George lay embosomed amid forest-clad hills.

The possession of these lakes was divided between the two rivals, the French being masters of Lake Champlain, and the English of Lake George, and their crystal waters were again and again reddened with the life blood of the antagonists and their Indian allies as they fought fiercely for the prize of sole possession that the

way between Canada and the colonies might be completely closed to whichever power was vanquished.

In the spring of the year 1755 the New England colonies combined to undertake the capture of Crown Point, the French stronghold on Lake Champlain, which for the past quarter of a century had been a veritable hornet's nest. To Governor Shirley of Massachusetts was due the credit of inspiring the undertaking, and his province was foremost in voting men and money toward its accomplishment, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and finally New York followed suit, and the result was a little army of several thousand men, whose appearance would have filled a European commander with scorn.

For they were none of them soldiers, but simply farmers and farmers' sons who had gallantly volunteered for the campaign, leaving their scattered dingy homes in the midst of rough fields of corn and pumpkins to shoulder the guns they all knew so well how to use, and when the fighting was over, if so be that they escaped the bullet and tomahawk, to return to their ploughing and sowing as though they had merely been out on a hunting trip.

Only one corps boasted a uniform, blue faced with red. The others were content with their ordinary clothes, and the most of them brought

their own guns. They had no bayonets, but carried hatchets in their belts instead, and at their sides were slung powder-horns on which they had carved quaint devices with the points of their pocket knives.

Their whole appearance was neither martial nor picturesque, and gave them no excuse for pride, but they were brave, brawny fellows, clear of head, quick of eye, swift of foot, and sure of hand, and incomparably better adapted for the irregular warfare of the time than the highly disciplined soldiery of either England or France. They knew the forests as the city-bred man knows the streets, and by day or night could traverse their fastnesses without fear of losing their way or falling into the hands of the enemy.

They were of all ages and sizes so to speak, from boys in their teens to gray-haired grandfathers, and from dwarfs to giants, but they all could give a good account of themselves in a fight either at long or close range.

The commander of this curious army was no less remarkable than his men, for he had never seen service, and knew nothing of war. An Irishman by birth, William Johnson had held an extensive domain on the banks of the Mohawk River for a score of years, and grown powerful and rich by trading with the Indians of the Five Nations who found him far more honest and reliable than his Dutch rivals in the busi-

ness, and over whom he came to acquire so profound an influence that the Government made him Indian Superintendent, an appointment that was hailed with joy throughout the Iroquois Confederacy.

He had taken to himself a Mohawk squaw for wife, and lived in almost baronial style in a fortified house which was a stronghold against his foes and a centre of lavish hospitality to friends and visitors whether white or red.

Governor Shirley had chosen him for the responsible post of commander because by so doing he prevented any jealousy among the New England colonies, gratified the important province of New York, and secured the co-operation of the Five Nations, a threefold advantage that could be secured in no other way.

The gathering place was at Albany, and here in the month of July were assembled several thousand provincials ready for the fray. Hither also came a swarm of Johnson's Mohawks, warriors, squaws, and children. They made things very lively. They adorned the General's face with war-paint, and he joined them in the war dance, and then with his sword cut the first slice from the ox that had been roasted whole for their entertainment.

"I shall be glad," remarked a New England surgeon surveying the somewhat riotous goings-on with a touch of complacent contempt, "if

they fight as eagerly as they ate their ox, and drank their wine."

Among the spectators of these rude festivities stood a youth whose otherwise pleasing countenance was so clouded that one seeing it could hardly fail to wonder what troubled him thus deeply.

Although still in his teens he had reached the stature of a man, and his well-knit figure gave evidence of no common share of strength and activity. He was dressed in a suit of tanned buckskin that became him particularly well, and with his double-barrelled smoothbore, carved powder-horn, keen-edged tomahawk, and long-bladed hunting knife was fully equipped to meet the foe.

The son of a pioneer settler upon the northern border of Massachusetts, Seth Allen had already drunk to its depths the cup of sorrow, for at one fell swoop the dusky allies of the French had rendered him a homeless orphan. With his own eyes he had beheld his parents tomahawked and scalped, the farmhouse burned, and the stock slaughtered while he had been carried off for torture in the Indian camp.

Escaping by a happy chance he made his way back to New England, and at once volunteered for active service against the French. Henceforward he had but one purpose in life—to serve his country in the field, and in view of what he

had suffered it is easy to understand with what impatience he awaited the advance of the English against Crown Point, and how he chafed at the delay which seemed to him inexcusable.

Now above all things this expedition needed to act promptly, and yet preparations went on with exasperating slowness. The troops and supplies were contributed by five different legislatures, and they each wanted their own way about something. Indeed at one time there was a regular deadlock because they could not agree as to their respective quotas of artillery and stores.

"The expedition goes on very much as a snail runs," grumbled Surgeon Williams. "It seems we may possibly see Crown Point this time twelve months."

Seth Allen, burning with eagerness to forget in the excitement of action the horrors which haunted his memory, could not understand why there should be all this useless dawdling, and one day ventured to address a group of men whom he knew to be among the leaders.

"Can you tell me, good sirs," he said, doffing his cap respectfully, "how much longer we are to be here doing nothing?"

In the little party were Colonel Titcomb and Seth Pomeroy of Massachusetts, who had both fought so well at Louisbourg, the sturdy Israel Putnam of Connecticut, and brave John Stark

of New Hampshire, and they all turned to look at the speaker while a suspicion of a smile curved the corners of their lips.

"Your question is not easy to answer, young man." It was Colonel Titcomb who spoke. "We would fain have some definite knowledge upon that matter ourselves. But may I inquire your name, and how you came here? You seem to have scarce sufficient years for such hard fighting as must fall to our lot if our purpose be effected."

A ruddy glow showed through the tan of the youth's cheeks, and he lowered both head and voice as he replied:

"My name is Seth Allen, and I come from Massachusetts. My father and mother were killed by the Indians who are in league with the French, and our home was burned. I am here because I have no other desire than to fight against those who have broken my heart."

There was a strange simplicity in the words. They came from the heart of the speaker, and they went straight to the hearts of his hearers. The veteran warriors looked at each other, and then at the youth with eyes full of intelligent sympathy, and Colonel Pomeroy, stepping forward, laid his hand gently upon the youth's shoulder, saying:

"We have heard of your sad story. No one has better reason to be here than you, and we

can well understand how hard you find this waiting. But patience is a soldierly virtue, and you must have your share of it. There will be plenty of fighting in due time."

The blush deepened upon Seth's countenance at the implied reproof, and, murmuring his excuses for having thus interrupted their conference, he moved away.

"That boy bears a heavy heart," said Colonel Titcomb, "and I should not like to be either the first Frenchman or Indian that he meets, for he has a long account to settle with our hated foes."

Patience in no small degree certainly was required by the provincials who had gathered together for active service, not to waste time in aimless dallying, and their anxiety to be up and doing was increased when the four Mohawk scouts which Johnson had sent to Canada returned with the startling intelligence that the French were fully informed of the English designs, and that eight thousand men were being sent to the defence of Crown Point.

Upon this a council of war was held whereat it was decided to send to the several provinces for reinforcements, and at the same time to begin the movement northward lest the volunteers, wearied of inaction, should lose heart in the enterprise.

Accordingly the main body, accompanied by a train of Dutch wagons, marched slowly over

the stumps and roots of a newly made road, and presently reached the borders of the most beautiful lake which Johnson loyally called Lake George in honor of the King of England.

Here camp was made on a piece of rough ground by the water's edge, the men pitching their tents among the stumps of the lately felled trees.

With a clear water-way to their destination, and hundreds of bateaux hauled overland from Fort Lyman (afterward called Fort Edward), ready to transport them thither, the men's spirits rose, for they naturally thought they would soon be led against the enemy, but in this they were again disappointed.

Johnson sent out scouts in different directions, but otherwise did nothing, and Seth Allen, at last unable to endure the continued inaction any longer, begged so earnestly of his captain to be allowed to go out scouting, that when an Indian brought word that he had found the trail of a body of men moving toward Fort Lyman, and Johnson called for a volunteer to carry a letter of warning to Colonel Blanchard, the commander of the fort, the captain at once sent for Seth, and telling him what was wanted said:

"Now, young man, there's the chance you have been fretting for."

"And I'm ready to take it," responded Seth promptly.

CHAPTER II

A PERILOUS RIDE

In order to a clear understanding of the situation it is necessary at this point to leave the provincial army for a little while and take a glance at what the French were doing.

They were by no means idle. While the British were preparing to attack Crown Point they were preparing to defend it, having first got warning of their purpose from the letters of the unfortunate Braddock found on the battlefield, which information was confirmed by the report of a reconnoitring party that had made its way as far as the Hudson, and returned with the news that Johnson's forces were already on the field.

The Marquis de Vandreuil, Governor of Canada, who on his part had been meditating an expedition for the capture of Oswego, and for this purpose had got together several battalions of regular soldiers under the command of Baron Dieskau, thereupon changed their destination from Lake Ontario to Lake Champlain.

Passing up the Richelieu River these troops embarked in boats and canoes for Crown Point.

Their veteran leader knew that the foes with whom he had to deal were not disciplined soldiers, but simply a mob of countrymen, and he never doubted for a moment that he would put them to flight at the first meeting, and keep them going until he had chased them back to Albany. Such, too, was the pleasant conviction of the Marquis de Vandreuil, who wrote to him in this strain:

"Make all haste, for when you return we shall send you to Oswego to execute our first design."

And he had obeyed orders to such good purpose that while Johnson's force lay idle at Lake George he had reached Crown Point at the head of nearly four thousand men, regulars, Canadians, and Indians.

Dieskau had no thought of waiting to be attacked. His troops were commanded to hold themselves ready to move at a moment's notice. The officers were bidden to take nothing with them but one spare shirt, one spare pair of shoes, a blanket, a bearskin, and twelve days' provisions, while the Indians were strictly enjoined not to amuse themselves by taking scalps until the enemy was entirely defeated, since they could kill ten men in the time required to scalp one, a grim injunction that reveals like a lightning flash the barbarity of that border warfare when all the laws of humanity were ignored.

Early in the month of September a scouting

party brought in an English prisoner caught near Fort Lyman. He was questioned under threat of being handed over to the Indians for torture if he did not tell the truth, but, nothing daunted, he endeavored to lure the French into a trap by telling them that the English army had fallen back to Albany, leaving only a few hundred men at Fort Lyman, which he said was a place to be easily taken.

Dieskau at once resolved on a rapid movement to seize the fort, and, leaving a part of his force at Ticonderoga, he embarked the rest in canoes, and hurried along through the narrow part of Lake Champlain, stretching southward through the wilderness.

Reaching the lower end of the lake they left their canoes under guard, and began their march through the dense forest toward Fort Lyman. They numbered fifteen hundred in all, and it was concerning their approach that the report had been brought in to the English camp, which Seth Allen was ready to carry to the endangered fort.

"You seem a likely lad," said Johnson when Seth was brought to him, "and will no doubt do as well as any one. You had better take a horse. You will run a better chance of getting through."

Seth was quite willing to make the venture afoot, but he was still better pleased to be

mounted, and a little later he galloped away over the rough road on his perilous task with the important letter hidden in his bosom.

For the first time since coming to the camp he felt in good spirits, and he would have whistled to keep himself company had he not known better than to make any more noise than was absolutely necessary.

He fully realized the danger he was running. Capture by the French meant probable torture, and certain death, while the chances were that if perceived by the foe or their merciless allies he would be shot on sight as so many others had been before him.

But this knowledge in no wise clouded his brave young spirit. He was too glad at being allowed to undertake the perilous mission to be concerned about his safety, and with every faculty keen for hint or sign of danger he hastened along the stump-strewn road toward his destination.

A high rate of speed was not possible owing to the roughness of the road, but he made very good progress nevertheless, and one-half the fourteen miles of the way had been covered ere the still solitude through which he was passing gave token of other human life.

Then it was revealed in startling enough fashion, for as Seth rode along carefully through the stumps and roots which were ready to bring

his steed to his knees, a shot rang out on his right, followed by a blood-curdling whoop, and a bullet whistled uncomfortably close to his head.

"Now for it!" he exclaimed, bending low over his horse's neck and driving in the spurs.

The willing creature responded with a bound that nearly unseated his rider and then sprang away at the top of his speed, soon leaving the Indian scout far behind.

If he were the only one to discover Seth it would be well enough, but that was hardly to be hoped for. The very fact of his presence implied the proximity of the French as Seth thoroughly understood, and at any moment others might show themselves.

On he rode, glancing anxiously to right and left, yet keeping a close watch on his horse. Again and again the animal stumbled over a root, but, thanks to Seth's skill in the saddle, did not go down, and the remaining distance to Fort Lyman was rapidly being decreased, when once more peril appeared in the path.

This time it was a small party of Canadians out on scouting duty, and they were right in the rider's road. He must either turn back, or go on to apparently certain capture.

For an instant Seth was at a loss which course to pursue. Then with that quickness of decision which was characteristic of him he determined upon a desperate expedient.

Reining in his horse he approached the Canadians at a walk as if he meant to surrender, whereby they were thrown off their guard. Counting upon an easy capture they dropped their guns which they had been holding in readiness to fire, and as Seth came up called out to him in jeering tones that he was their prisoner.

By way of response Seth, now within a few yards of them, clapped spurs to his horse, and drove him right into the centre of the little group.

This sudden and unexpected action took them completely by surprise. With oaths and angry exclamations they threw themselves out of the way of the horse, which ere they could recover and take aim with their guns, was many yards away galloping furiously along the road.

A scattering volley followed the fugitive, but not one of the leaden messengers touched him as he crouched over the horse's neck, and only one hit the animal, inflicting a slight wound in the hind quarter that simply served to quicken its speed.

For the rest of the way Seth did not spare his steed. Taking chances every minute of a fall that might mean the rendering of one or both of them helpless, he galloped on until at last the welcome sight of Fort Lyman gladdened his eyes, and presently he pulled up the panting creature which had borne him so well at the gate that was quickly opened to receive him.

Colonel Blanchard thanked him warmly for the warning message, and bade him stay at the fort until it would be safe for him to return to Lake George.

Immediately all possible preparations for defence were made at Fort Lyman, and full of anxiety its garrison awaited the expected attack.

But the days went by without bringing any sign of the enemy, and Seth again began to grow impatient. The confinement of the fort became irksome to his liberty-loving nature. He felt sure that there was plenty to be done at Lake George, and chafed at waiting in idleness inside the fort, where there was nothing to occupy the long hours.

Had the garrison known the reason for the non-appearance of the enemy they might not only have rested with easy minds, but might even have taken the field on their own account, as all danger of attack had passed for a time. The change of plan on the part of the French had been brought about in this way.

They had made their way through the forest until they were within three miles of Fort Lyman, and there as they halted for the night a dozen wagons came along the road from Lake George. They were in charge of mutinous drivers who had left the English camp without orders, little dreaming the punishment that waited their misconduct. Several of them were

shot, two were captured, and the remainder escaped into the woods with the Indians at their heels.

The two captives on being questioned, told a very different story from the prisoner taken by the scouting party a few days previously. According to them, instead of the English having fallen back upon Albany, they were encamped in large force at Lake George.

When the Indians heard this they held a council and decided that they would not attack the fort which they thought well supplied with cannon, but they were quite willing to go against the camp at the lake.

All remonstrances went for nothing. They were not to be moved from their resolution, and Baron Dieskau had perforce to alter his plan of campaign. Now he was not only young but daring to rashness, and burning with eagerness to emulate the recent victory over Braddock. According to the reports the enemy greatly outnumbered him, but his Canadian advisers had assured him that the English colonial militia were the worst troops on the face of the earth.

"The more there are of them, the more we shall kill," he said with complacent confidence to his Canadian and Indian allies, and in the morning the order was given to leave Fort Lyman alone, and to march to the lake.

In the mean time Seth Allen, made desper-

ate by delay, in spite of the efforts of his friends to restrain him, left the fort, and, by making a wide detour, succeeded in reaching the camp in safety, although almost every foot of the way thither had been fraught with perils.

Here he found the whole place astir, for an advance against the French was about to take place. Congratulating himself upon having arrived in time to take part in it Seth carefully examined his fighting gear, to make sure that everything was in readiness for active service.

CHAPTER III

BULLETS AND BAYONETS

By the wagoners who had managed to escape the fate which befell their companions Johnson had been warned of the proximity of the French war party, but he somehow formed a very wrong conception of its strength.

Instead of preparing to meet them with his full force his first plan was to send out two detachments of five hundred men each, one going toward Fort Lyman, and the other toward South Bay, with the object of catching the enemy in their retreat.

But Hendrick, the brave and sagacious chief of the Mohawks, expressed his dissent after the dramatic fashion of his race. Picking up a single stick he broke it easily with his hands. Then picking up several, he put them together and showed that they could not be broken thus.

Johnson was shrewd enough to take the hint, and directed that the two detachments be joined in one. Still the old savage shook his head.

"If they are to be killed," said he, "they are too many. If they are to fight, they are too few."

But the commander would make no further change, and the Indian not only ceased his objections, but mounted on a gun carriage and harangued his warriors, exhorting them to fight bravely for their friends, and to show no mercy to their enemies.

The morning was still young when the thousand men, under the command of Ephraim Williams and Colonel Whiting, marched off from the camp in quest of the French, their orders being to intercept their supposed retreat, and if possible find and destroy their canoes.

Seth Allen was with the vanguard, his pulse beating rapidly, and every nerve aquiver, for he felt it in his bones that there would be plenty of fighting before the day ended.

"I hope the French will wait for us," he said to Elisha Halley, by whom he was walking. "Maybe if they get warning of our advance they will go back to their canoes and we have nothing to follow them with on the water."

Elisha smiled contemptuously as he replied:

"It all depends upon how many they are and what they know about our strength. If they think they outnumber us they will not fail to wait for us, but if we outnumber them they will retreat fast enough. Nevertheless I think we ought to go forward carefully. They might be lying in ambush somewhere ahead."

The Colonials certainly showed a lack of common sense and utter ignorance of strategy in their advance against the enemy, for no scouts were thrown out in front or flank. They pushed on in full security until the sharp eye of old Hendrick detected a sign of danger.

He at once gave warning, but it was too late. The dense thickets on the left suddenly blazed out a deadly fire, and the English fell by scores. The head of the column, as Dieskau afterward boasted, "was doubled up like a pack of cards." The old Mohawk chief's horse, on which he rode because he was so old and fat, was shot under him, and he himself killed with a bayonet as he tried to gain his feet.

Seth had a wonderful escape. The bullets whistled past him on either side, but left him untouched, and he returned the fire with his own gun as best he could in the midst of the fearful confusion.

Although it was his first experience of battle he felt no qualm of fear. On the contrary, all his nervousness vanished, and thinking only how he might fight to the best advantage, he loaded and fired as rapidly as possible.

Presently the voice of Ephraim Williams was heard calling upon his men to follow him to a piece of rising ground on the right, and Seth obeyed the command.

"We must rally, men, or we will all be de-

stroyed." Williams cried as he led them up the slope.

But he had not reached half-way when there came a volley from the bushes that laid him dead. And it was followed close by a hot fire poured in on the right flank.

Then there was a panic. Many fled outright. The whole column recoiled and began to retreat. Its van became the rear, and all the force of the enemy rushed upon it, shouting and screeching.

Seth found himself entangled in a mob of terrified men who had no other thought than to get out of reach of the deadly fire of their assailants; and, although his spirit rebelled against this ignominious flight, he had no alternative than to take part in it.

Happily after a brief interval of confusion Colonel Whiting succeeded in rallying a part of Williams' regiment; and they, adopting Indian tactics, fighting behind trees, and firing and falling back by turns, were able with the aid of the Mohawks to cover the retreat.

"A very handsome retreat they made," was the testimony of Colonel Pomeroy, "and so continued until they came within about three-quarters of a mile of our camp. This was the last fire our men gave our enemies which killed great numbers of them; and they were seen to drop as pigeons."

In the alternate fighting and falling back Seth took his full share, using the tree trunks for cover as cleverly as any of the Indians, and firing and reloading his musket with all possible speed, yet aiming carefully so that his bullets might not be wasted.

The lust of battle had full possession of him. He utterly forgot himself in the deadly business of the moment, and without a quiver of nerve saw white men and red falling beside him and in front of him mortally smitten.

Again and again the leaden messengers of death passed perilously close to him, but he remained unscathed. As the fierce conflict began to slacken somewhat he observed a Colonial, who had not been quick enough in retreat, stumble and fall headlong, and the next instant a stalwart Indian, hideous with war paint, sprang out from the enemy's line and dashed toward the man tomahawk in hand.

Seth had just fired and there was no time to reload. If he would save his helpless countryman it must be by exposing himself to a like fate. Yet he did not hesitate.

Holding his heavy gun in readiness to use as a club, he sprang from behind the tree-trunk which had sheltered him and rushed into the zone of fire.

His action was redeemed from utter recklessness by the heroic impulse which inspired it,

and to the credit of the French be it said that they forebore to fire upon him, leaving it to the Indian to deal with him first, and then accomplish what he had set out to do.

The Iroquois, when he saw the youth coming at him, gave a grunt of contempt and raised his tomahawk menacingly. But Seth kept right on until he had got within striking distance, when whirling his gun around his head he aimed a terrible blow at his opponent.

The latter sprang aside to evade it, and as he did so his foot caught in a hidden root and he fell forward on his knees. Ere he could recover himself the butt of Seth's musket took him in the back of the head, and over he went like a log, the tomahawk flying from his nerveless grasp.

While this was happening, the fallen colonial had got to his feet again and was looking about in a bewildered way, having lost his bearings and not knowing in which direction to continue the flight interrupted by his fall.

"Here, come with me," cried Seth, grasping his arm. "Bend as low as you can and run for your life."

The fellow obeyed instantly and the two of them made all haste back to their own lines, followed by a volley from the enemy which happily, however, did neither of them any harm.

Seth's gallant feat won the admiration of all

who beheld it, and the profound gratitude of the man to whom he had rendered such timely succor, and who proved to be from his own province.

When Dieskau saw that the English had really rallied, and were returning the fire of his men with deadly effect, he ordered a halt and had the trumpet sounded to collect his scattered men, with the purpose of pressing forward in good order so as to make the most of the advantage already gained.

Had he been able to do so he could hardly have failed to gain a complete victory over Johnson, but fortunately for the latter, the Iroquois, who had lost many of their braves, became sullen and unmanageable, and the French Canadians, whose veteran leader, Legardeur de St. Pierre, had been killed, showed signs of wavering, and it was not until after considerable delay that the advance was made with the regulars leading the way.

Meantime in Johnson's camp there had been great anxiety and no little confusion. About an hour after Williams had marched out with his thousand men the sound of heavy firing was heard in the distance, and as it grew nearer and louder those in the camp realized that their comrades, instead of pursuing a flying foe, were themselves in retreat.

Johnson at once set about preparations for

defence which should have been made long before. A barricade constructed of wagons, inverted bateaux, and tree trunks was hurriedly made along the front of the camp, and three cannons were planted so as to sweep the road, while a fourth was dragged up to the ridge of the hill.

In the midst of this confusion the defeated party began to come in. First, scared fugitives, both white and red; then gangs of men bringing the wounded, and finally the main body marching in good order down the road. Among these was Seth, very much out of humor at having to turn his back on the enemy, and hoping in his heart that they would have the courage to attack the camp.

"If we hadn't been such fools as to walk right into the trap they laid for us," he said to the man he had rescued as they marched together, "we'd not be running from them now, but they'd be running from us, and thinking only how far it was to Crown Point."

"You're just right," emphatically responded the other, whose name was John Wilcox. "There ought to have been scouts ahead of us to give us warning. I don't know what our colonel was thinking about when he let us go on like that, as if there were no French within twenty miles of us."

But of course it is always easy to be wise after

the event, and now that the blunder had been committed, and had cost so dearly, it only remained to make the best of what was certainly a very serious situation.

Accordingly five hundred men were detailed to guard the flanks of the camp, while the remainder took up their position behind the wagons, or lay flat behind the logs and upturned bateaux, the Massachusetts men being on the right and the Connecticut men on the left. Not counting the Indians the actual fighting force numbered about seventeen hundred, the majority of them being rustics, who had never been under fire until that morning.

They were hardly settled at their posts when Seth's keen eyes caught the flash of bayonets through the boughs, and a minute later the white-coated regulars of France came into view, marching steadily down the road in serried array. At the same time a terrific burst of war-whoops rose on either side of them, and in the words of Pomeroy to his wife, " the Canadians and Indians helter-skelter, the woods full of them, came running with undaunted courage right down the hill upon us, expecting to make us flee."

But in this they were greatly mistaken, for although some of the Colonials grew uneasy, their officers, sword in hand, threatened instant death to any who should attempt to

leave their posts, and not one of them made a move.

Seth could not help admiring the steadiness shown by the regulars in their advance. Dieskau certainly had them well in hand, but the rest of his force, both red and white, scattered through the woods shouting, whooping, and firing from behind trees.

Well was it indeed for the English that their opponents as a whole did not display the same good discipline as the French, for had they done so the result would have been disastrous; but when only the regulars obeyed orders their attack lost much of its force and gave Captain Eyre, who commanded the artillery, a chance to open upon them with grape, which he did so effectually as to break up their orderly array and compel them to take to cover.

The firing on both sides now became general, and soon waxed so furious that to quote again Pomeroy's graphic words, " The hail stones from heaven were never much thicker than the bullets," yet, as he proudly added, " Blessed be God, that did not in the least daunt or disturb us."

Seth's position was on the right flank, and as Dieskau first directed his attack against the left and centre, he was for a time simply a spectator of the struggle.

But when the commander of the French found he was being so stoutly withstood, he

turned his attention to the right and tried to force it.

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed Seth in a tone of satisfaction, "it is our turn now. We will give them all they want."

CHAPTER IV

THE DEFEAT OF DIESKAU

The men from Massachusetts showed no more sign of giving back before the enemy than had their brethren from the sister provinces. Loading and firing as quickly as their old-fashioned muskets allowed, they poured so deadly a fire into the French ranks that the latter could make no material advance, but were compelled to keep behind cover, and return the fire as best they might.

The conflict had continued in this fashion for nearly an hour with considerable loss of life on both sides, but without definite advantage, when Seth, becoming convinced that an officer in rich uniform, whom he could see at the centre of the French line, was their commander, determined to try if he could not shoot him down, as he reasoned that this would put them in a panic.

So, despite the protests of his companions, to whom alone he revealed his design, he crept through the barricade and began to crawl nearer the enemy. It was an extremely dangerous, not to say reckless proceeding, and those of his own party who observed it considered him as good

as lost. Colonel Williams indeed shouted after him:

"Come back there, young man, you're going to your death!"

But, carried away by his great purpose, Seth paid no heed to the command. There was a big tree whose wide-spreading roots offered excellent cover about fifty yards ahead of him, and it was for this he was making, as if he reached it unharmed, he could thence get good aim at the officer he had in mind.

Lying flat on his stomach, he wriggled on slowly, yet steadily. It was as difficult work as it was dangerous, and demanded all his young strength. At any moment he might be perceived by an Iroquois or Canadian, who would make a quick dash forward and despatch him as he lay upon the ground. More than once a random bullet struck the turf uncomfortably near him.

Yet with grim determination he kept on, and at last, when nearly spent with the exertion, reached the roots of the big tree, and curled himself up there into the smallest possible space until his nerves should get steady.

Then with the utmost caution he peered out in quest of the officer.

"Good!" he exclaimed exultantly as he quickly withdrew his head. "He's there still, and I'll have him as sure as my name is Seth Allen."

Resting the gun upon the root and taking aim with the utmost care he pulled the trigger.

But just as he did so Baron Dieskau, for Seth had guessed rightly, made a sudden movement, and the bullet went by him harmlessly.

"Botheration!" growled Seth. "Why couldn't he keep still?" and he hastened to reload.

Warned by the whirr of the bullet, Dieskau stepped behind a tree and remained there for some time, while Seth, chagrined at the result of his first shot, impatiently awaited another chance.

It came a little later when the Baron, angered by the persistent disobedience to command of the Indians and Canadians, forgot his own safety and sprang out from cover to give an order to the regulars, who were fast falling into confusion under the well-directed fire of the English.

"Now then, sir," said Seth, as though he were speaking to his intended victim, "I'll have you this time," and he fired.

As the report rang out, Baron Dieskau staggered and fell to the ground, and Seth was for the moment tempted to spring to his feet and wave his cap triumphantly.

But he held himself in check, and again loaded his musket. The officer had fallen indeed, but he might not be killed, and another shot might be necessary to dispose of him. That this was the case presently became clear, for another

officer came galloping to the aid of the wounded one, and Seth, moved by his unselfish devotion, forebore to fire.

But some of his companions were not so considerate, and while the adjutant was attending to the wound from Seth's bullet, the unfortunate commander was again hit in the knee and thigh.

The adjutant, who himself had been wounded, then called for the Canadians to carry Baron Dieskau to the rear, but on seeing this Seth exclaimed:

"Oh, no! You're not going to escape. You must be taken prisoner," and fired at one of the Canadians, bringing him to the ground, and causing the other to seek safety in flight.

The commander thereupon ordered the adjutant to leave him where he lay and to lead the regulars in a last effort against the English camp.

But it was now too late. Johnson's men, singly or in small squads, were already leaping over their barricade and falling upon their antagonists with their hatchets and the butts of their guns. The French and their allies alike fled before the fierce onslaught, and their sorely wounded yet dauntless commander was again shot before he fell into the hands of those who, realizing who he was, carried him off to Johnson, who had himself been wounded earlier in the day.

It was late in the afternoon when the final

rout took place, and all through that night the shattered French force continued its flight through the forest, reaching their canoes the following day in a deplorable condition, for they had left their knapsacks behind, and were spent with fatigue and famine.

Great were the rejoicings in the English camp. The Colonials felt as proud of themselves as if they had already accomplished all that which they had set out to do, and their commander was so pleased that he was in no hurry to make a further move. He was content to hold his own position, which he proceeded to strengthen by making a solid breastwork around the camp and building a fort on a rising ground by the lake.

But this was just where he erred. He should have followed up his success with the utmost promptitude, and had he done so it is altogether probable that Ticonderoga, if not, indeed, Crown Point, could have been taken from the enemy.

The men from Massachusetts were eager to push on, and Seth, who had by no means got his fill of fighting, would not have hesitated to tell General Johnson in plain language what in his opinion ought to be done, but as the great man was confined to his tent by his wound, and could not even attend the councils of war that were held, leaving them to Colonel Lyman, who was second in command, he had to content him-

self by speaking out his mind in camp, which he did with decided frankness and force.

Then followed a miserable period of inaction that came near sickening Seth of the whole business. Although reinforcements arrived until by October there were some thirty-six hundred men in the camp, after various prolonged councils it was decided to be unwise to proceed against the French. Yet the little army lay more than a month longer at the lake, while the discontent and disgust of the men increased daily under the rains, frosts, and snows of a dreary November, until at last some of them, throwing off all discipline, went away in squads without any pretence of asking leave.

Seth's companion was one of these, and he strove hard to persuade the young fellow to join him. But Seth resolutely refused.

"No, I'll stay right here," he replied, with a touch of temper in his tone. "And you ought to do the same. We're not done with the French. If we don't go against them, they'll be sure to come back, and then there'll be need of us all."

"Oh! as for that," responded Wilcox, "they'll not be back before spring, and we can get here first easily enough, and be ready to meet them."

But Seth was not to be tempted. He let Wilcox and others go away, and when at last it was

decided that the forts should be garrisoned by a certain number of men from each province, and that the rest of the army should be permitted to return to their homes, he promptly offered himself for garrison duty.

It would probably be dull, dreary work, but he preferred it to going back to what had once been his happy home, but now fraught with such harrowing associations, and so he settled down to the monotonous routine of helping to keep guard at the hastily built and by no means impregnable fort.

As the days dragged by almost without incident, Seth again grew restless, and set himself to consider how he might find some diversion. By this time winter had fully set in, and the basin of the lake was covered with ice. Seth was a strong and expert skater, and whiled away many an afternoon speeding over the glassy surface or working out figures upon it.

In this amusement several others of the little garrison joined him, and one in particular, Reuben Thayer, from Connecticut, made the exercise more interesting by rivalling Seth in feats of skill and speed.

These two quite outshone their companions, and this served as a bond of friendship between them, neither being at all jealous of the other's proficiency.

One bright, clear day, when the ice was in

superb condition, a daring design flashed into Seth's mind, which he made haste to share with his friend.

"How would you like to take a good long skate, Reuben?" he asked in a significant tone, which caused the other to guess that the question had a purpose behind it.

Reuben gave him a searching glance as he replied:

"That depends. Which way were you thinking of going?"

Seth paused long enough before answering to give special emphasis to his words, although he took care to utter them in a tone of well-feigned carelessness.

"Oh, up north! There's nothing to see at this end of the lake."

A smile of intelligence broke over Reuben's homely countenance. The answer was just what he expected, and he was quite ready to share its spirit.

"How far north might you be thinking of going, Seth?" he inquired.

"Until it seems best to turn back, if we don't want to stay there for good," responded Seth, returning the smile of comprehension.

"Very good. I'm willing to go with you. Shall we ask any of the others to join us?"

"No, Reuben, I think we'd better not. If anything happens, we'll have only ourselves to

think about, and none of the rest can skate alongside of us anyway."

In saying this Seth was not making a mere empty boast, for in truth both he and Reuben could easily distance anybody else in the garrison.

So the two friends made it up between them that they would vary the monotony of their lives by undertaking the perilous enterprise of a scout on skates in the direction of Crown Point.

CHAPTER V

OFF ON A SCOUT

WHEN Seth communicated his design to the commander of the fort, the latter at first made fun of him. Then, finding he was in thorough earnest, sought to dissuade him from it; but at last, realizing the seriousness of the young fellow's purpose, and coming to think that, after all, he might carry it through successfully and gain some valuable information, he consented to him and Reuben making the venture.

They set out in the early morning of a December day, each having a blanket and a knapsack, containing four days' provisions, strapped on his back, and the rest of the garrison gave them a cheer as they glided away northward.

They were both in high spirits, for the restraint of garrison life had become very wearisome, and the outing they had now started upon was very much to their mind, despite its probability of peril.

"I wonder will any of the French be thinking of the same thing," said Seth as with strong steady strokes they sped over the glistening ice. "Their Canadians must be good skaters even if

they're not themselves, and you'd think they'd be curious to know what we've been doing since we sent them back so much sadder and wiser than they came."

"We must keep a sharp look-out for them," answered Reuben, "for we certainly don't want to get into any such trap as our fellows did at first in the fight when they walked right into the ambush the French had laid for us."

"No, indeed," responded Seth emphatically. "They mustn't catch us like that, and, what's more, they're not going to."

All through the morning they skated on at their ease, because there was not the slightest chance of any of the enemy being below the Narrows, which they had fixed upon as the limit of that day's advance.

At noon they halted for dinner and a good rest. They could have only a cold bite, for it would not have been wise to light a fire; but they munched their meat and biscuits contentedly, and quenched their thirst at a hole cut in the ice.

While they lay curled up in their blankets in a sheltered nook several deer came out of the forest near by, and their hunter's instinct was at once aroused.

"What a splendid shot!" murmured Reuben under his breath as his hand went out toward his gun. "Just see that fine buck!"

"Not for your life!" exclaimed Seth in so emphatic a tone that it reached the acute ears of the deer, and they bounded away out of danger. "When we do fire, it must be at another kind of game," he added, and Reuben meekly accepted the reproof.

When refreshed and rested, they set off again, and skated pretty steadily through the afternoon, reaching the Narrows on the early dusk of the winter's day.

Although not a very cold night, it was cheerless enough without a fire; but they were both so tired that they soon fell asleep, and forgot all the discomforts of their situation.

Between the Narrows and Ticonderoga spread the broadest part of the lake, and it behooved them to be very wary in their further advance lest they should be discovered by hostile scouts venturing southward. Accordingly the following day they closely skirted the eastern border, holding themselves ready to dodge ashore and seek concealment in the forest, or to dart out toward the centre of the lake according as danger might threaten from either direction.

Several times, as they eagerly scanned the country ahead, they thought they caught a glimpse of figures moving through the trees; but it always proved to be a false alarm, or nothing more to be feared than, perhaps, a deer slipping silently out of sight.

Once they saw a big bear that they might easily have shot had they been out for that purpose, and Reuben quite grudged having to let him go in peace, for he had particularly fine fur.

The farther north they pushed the more cautious they must needs be, and it was a positive relief to both when the shadows of night again fell around them without any appearance of their foes.

"We must be pretty close to the fort now," said Seth as, having sought out the snuggest spot within reach, they settled down to spend another fireless night wrapped up in their blankets. "There don't seem to be any of their scouts moving round. I wonder what they find to do with themselves? I guess it's about as tiresome up there as it is down with us."

"You may be sure it is," replied Reuben. "This garrison duty is dull work for everybody. I'll be very glad when the winter's over, and things get moving again. What are you thinking of doing in the morning, Seth?"

"Well, I just want to get a good look at Fort Ticonderoga, and if possible find out how big a garrison they have there," Seth answered, and then after a little pause he added: "If it be that the French have left only a handful of men in charge, it might be worth while our fellows coming up on their skates and attacking the place."

Reuben gave a whistle of mingled surprise and admiration at the audacity of the idea.

"You'd want to know right well just how many there are in the fort, wouldn't you?" he suggested.

"Yes, of course I would, and that's exactly what we must do our best to find out to-morrow morning."

The programme for the next day having thus been made clear, they talked together about other things until they fell asleep.

At dawn they were astir, and now they must no longer trust to their skates, but make their way overland with utmost caution, lest at any moment a Canadian scout or Iroquois brave should be upon them from behind a tree.

Seth had only a general idea of the position of that fort and its relation to the surrounding country; but he was a scout by instinct, and Reuben followed him with admiration and implicit obedience as he skilfully made his way through the thick forest, his object being to reach an elevation from which he could command a clear view of Ticonderoga.

Advancing slowly and with many detours the two daring youths at last accomplished their purpose without their presence being discovered or suspected by the enemy, shortly before midday gaining a point of view that was precisely what they sought.

They were on the high bluffs immediately opposite Ticonderoga, from which they were separated only by a narrow stretch of water, and, while keeping themselves perfectly concealed among the trees, they could see everything that was going on in and around the fort.

"This is fine!" exclaimed Seth gleefully as he lay flat on the ground and fixed his gaze upon the enemy's stronghold. "What would they think if they knew that we were up here watching them? I reckon they'd send a party after us pretty quick."

"That they would," said Reuben, with a pretence of a shiver, for he was not really in any fear, "and they'd not deal any too gently with us either, would they?"

"No, sir," responded Seth. "That's not their way, but they're not going to have the chance if I can help it."

For several hours they remained in their eyrie, noting every movement at the fort, and carefully studying its position, so as to be able to give information to those at Fort William as to the chances of an attack.

They could see the garrison going about their duties, and from the number of them came to the conclusion that it would be folly to attempt an attack without a great many more men than could be spared from their own fort.

"But it wouldn't be a hard place to take if

you went about it the right way and had a strong enough force, would it, Reuben?" said Seth after he had thoroughly surveyed the fort and its surroundings, and then he proceeded to outline a plan of attack that certainly did credit to his wits.

Reuben listened approvingly to it all, and, when he had finished, mildly asked:

"How much longer shall we stay here, Seth? We've about seen all there is to see. Had we not better be starting back?"

"To be sure we had," replied Seth, whose enthusiasm over the possibility of successfully attacking the fort had caused him to be oblivious of the flight of time. "Come along; we mustn't stay here any longer."

Just as they were about to start they saw a party set out from the fort on skates and speed away southward.

"Whew!" exclaimed Seth. "I wonder what that means. Are they going off to do a little scouting on their own account? In that case we'll have to keep a sharp look-out or we may fall into their hands."

There was certainly need for using the utmost precaution in their movements, and it was with a keener sense of danger than they had felt before that the two New Englanders began their return journey.

So long as they were concealed by the woods

they were safe enough from discovery, but once they took to the ice, which they must do as soon as possible, for their provisions were running low, and would not by any means last for a long journey overland, then they ran the risk of being sighted and pursued.

But there was no help for it, and no time to be lost, so they urged their way through the forest until they reached the edge of the lake.

Then with eager eyes and fast-beating pulses they scanned the glistening surface before them. Not a living thing was in view, but at any moment from around one of the wooded points the enemy might appear.

"I wish I knew which side they're on," said Seth, the anxious expression of his countenance showing his state of mind. "The farther away we can keep from them the better chance we'll have, for I'm sure we can skate as fast or faster than any of them."

"They'll most likely be on the other side I should think," responded Reuben; "so we had better keep to this one."

This seemed reasonable enough, so they put on all speed and dashed down the lake.

The exhilarating motion restored their spirits, and confident of their ability to hold their own on skates against any of the enemy, they flew along over the smooth ice for mile after mile without encountering any cause for alarm until

as they rounded a point beyond which was a deep cove, they saw something which sent their hearts into their mouths.

It was the very party whose departure from Fort Ticonderoga they had witnessed, and it consisted of six Canadians on skates, who were just starting off again after having rested for a while in the snug shelter of the cove.

They sighted the New Englanders at once, and with fierce cries, which sent a shiver through the two youths, began the chase.

Happily their guns were not ready, for since Seth and Reuben were at first within range they would of course, have fired at them, but now they had to depend upon their skill and strength as skaters to effect the capture of the daring scouts.

Straight southward darted the Colonials, their pursuers a couple of hundred yards in the rear, and following with grim determination.

Seth and Reuben, although they fully realized the seriousness of the situation, felt no very great apprehension as to the outcome. They had entire confidence in their ability to more than hold their own while on the ice, and if they were compelled to take to the land, they did not doubt but that they could find a place of concealment until the danger was passed, or make their way through the forest with sufficient speed to distance pursuit.

The two contingencies they had to fear were that in their rapid flight one or other might trip and fall, injuring himself or his skates, or that there might be another party of the enemy lower down the lake into whose hands they would be driven by those coming after them.

Both these possibilities, so unpleasant to contemplate, had presented themselves to Seth; but they did not daunt his brave spirit, nor did he mention them to Reuben, who no doubt had his own thoughts.

The early dusk of mid-winter drew on as mile after mile of the flawless ice was covered without the pursuers making any gain. By dint of frequent spurting the New Englanders might have widened the gap, and Reuben was anxious that they should do so; but Seth thought differently.

So long as they kept out of range of the French it seemed to him best to reserve their strength and wind, for at any moment the appearance of Canadians in front might render necessary a supreme effort to evade them.

If they should be thus caught between two parties, Seth's mind was made up to fight to the last gasp, as he would rather die fighting his foe than be taken alive only to suffer death subsequently by hideous torture.

"Thank God, it's getting dark!" exclaimed Seth, breaking the silence which had lasted for

some time. "If we can keep on as we are now, we'll be able to put ashore and hide ourselves among the trees."

"We can't do it any too soon to suit me," panted Reuben breathlessly, for the tremendous strain was beginning to tell upon him. "I'm tiring fast, and another couple of miles will finish me completely."

"Cheer up—cheer up, Reuben!" responded Seth, giving him an affectionate pat on the shoulder. "They're farther behind than they were, and we'll soon be able to make a dash for the woods."

CHAPTER VI

ONE OF ROGERS' RANGERS

THE approach of darkness stirred the Canadians to even greater efforts than they had hitherto put forth, and after a furious spurt, which perceptibly decreased the distance between them and the fugitives, they halted for a moment to send a volley after them.

Their intentions were of the best from their point of view, but happily they might as well have saved their ammunition, for what with being all out of breath themselves and consequently unable to take steady aim, while their moving targets called for no ordinary marksmanship, the bullets went "zip, zip!" harmlessly past the New Englanders, ricochetting over the ice as if they were going on indefinitely.

Seth laughed at the vain attempt to put a stop to their flight.

"It would take better shots than they have in the French army to hit us at this distance," he said, "and those fellows aren't going to have another chance either, for we'll get out of their sight right away. Come along, Reuben, we'll take to the woods."

For some time they had been working toward shore, and now they were so near that a few more swift strokes served to bring them to land at a spot where the trees came close to the lake side.

"Here we are!" cried Seth in a tone of manifest relief. "Off with your skates now, Reuben;" and he hastily unbuckled his own.

"Right glad I am to take them off," said Reuben emphatically, "for I'm dead tired of them."

"They've been our best friends notwithstanding," responded Seth, "and we'll need them again before we get back to the fort."

Then, skates off, they dived into the thick forest, where the shadows were already deepening, and with relief beyond expression realized that they were safe from further pursuit.

The Canadians gave them a parting volley as they disappeared, and Seth, turning round, waved his cap at them derisively.

"Fooled this time!" he cried. "Try again!" And Reuben, whose spirits were restored by the passing away of immediate danger, laughed heartily at his impudence.

They had landed on the west side of the lake, and so long as there was sufficient light left for them to pick their steps with any safety, they kept on southward.

At last, however, the darkness grew too

dense, and they too weary to go any farther, so they lay down to rest for the night, rejoicing at their escape, although every bone and muscle ached with fatigue.

They were not disturbed in their slumbers, and, quite refreshed by them, set off at dawn, keeping to the woods for a time, but afterward returning to the ice where they judged they were safe.

The rest of the return journey to the fort was free from excitement, and they had a hearty reception from their comrades, who were in considerable doubt as to whether they should ever see them again.

The commander was greatly pleased at their exploit and at the information they brought back concerning what the French were doing at Ticonderoga.

"They are no doubt going to make a very strong place of it, and the longer they are left undisturbed the harder it will be to take it," he said. "I must send word to General Johnson and urge him to make an attack if possible before the winter is over."

Seth's countenance lighted up at these words. From what he had seen, he had no doubt that with a moderately strong force the new stronghold could be captured with all its garrison, and he keenly relished the prospect of having a share in the enterprise.

But nothing was done after all, and the days dragged by as dully as before, until there appeared upon the scene one morning a man with whom Seth was henceforth to be very closely associated, and through whom he was to find the fullest outlet for his adventurous spirit.

This was Robert Rogers, of New Hampshire, one of the most remarkable and picturesque personalities of his time, who rendered splendid service to the English in his own romantic way.

His career had been a strange one. His boyhood was spent amid the rough surroundings of a frontier village. Growing to manhood, he engaged in some occupation which led him to frequent journeyings in the wilderness between the French and English settlements, and these gave him a good knowledge of both. It also taught him to speak French. Just what the mysterious business was is not precisely known, but in all probability it was a smuggling trade with Canada, the dangers and profits of which alike attracted his daring spirit.

For some time previous to his appearance at Fort William Henry he had been actively employed on a series of excursions into the enemy's territory, which he had conducted with such extraordinary skill and uniform success as to earn for himself a great reputation, and Rogers' Rangers, as his men, chiefly New Hampshire borderers, were called, had come to be more feared

by the French than any other part of the provincial force.

Seth had heard so much about him that he had become a veritable hero in his mind, and he had quite determined at the first opportunity to offer himself as a recruit to his company.

His joy may be readily imagined, therefore, when the dull routine of the day was broken in upon by the unexpected approach of a band of men whose whole appearance was so striking that he at once realized that they were no other than the famous Rogers' Rangers.

"Look, Reuben!" he cried to his friend as they stood together on the rude ramparts, whence they had been somewhat disconsolately gazing toward the lake, and wishing that some French or Indians would come into sight by way of variety. "See what's coming; I am sure that's Rogers and his Rangers. How glad I am! I've been waiting to see them this long time!"

The party comprised not more than fifty. They wore a curious sort of woodland uniform appropriate to their methods of operation, and their well-tanned countenances showed plainly enough how much of their life was spent away from the shelter of a roof.

"Fine-looking fellows, aren't they?" Seth exclaimed admiringly, as the newcomers passed through the gate of the fort with quick, steady step, and then came to a halt before the com-

mander, while their leader stepped forward to pay his respects and present his communication.

Major Rogers certainly was a man who could not fail to command attention in any company. In figure he was tall and well knit, every movement manifesting strength and agile ease. With the exception of his nose, which, as is often the case in people of particularly vigorous character, was disproportionately big, his features were good, and he had a clear, bold eye, that expressed his daring spirit, while it took in everything within the range of vision.

Ambitious and determined, by no means uneducated, and so skilled in woodcraft as to be a match for the subtlest Indian, he possessed every qualification for the especially perilous but important work he had entered into so heartily, and there was not a part of the provincial force which could have been less easily done without than his battalion of Rangers.

Great was the satisfaction at Fort William when Major Rogers announced that he had come by the orders of General Johnson to take up his quarters there for the present and to devote himself to the task of keeping as close a watch as possible upon the operations of the enemy at Ticonderoga and Crown Point.

From Commander Glasier down every member of the garrison did his best to show his hospitality, and they indulged in a general carouse

that night which would have given the French a fine opportunity to storm the fort if they had only been aware of the condition of their foes.

Seth lost no time in making up to Major Rogers. It was not his way to let the grass grow under his feet, and accordingly the first chance he saw of a word with the great man alone he seized the opportunity.

Now it happened that the occasion was not an altogether propitious one, because the major, having drunk rather deeply the previous night, and told stories, and sung songs until the small hours, as a natural consequence felt somewhat out of sorts—in fact, like a bear with a sore head.

Consequently when Seth, approaching him, said in a modest enough tone:

"I am Seth Allen from Massachusetts, sir, and I would like to speak with you for a few moments."

The Major, fixing upon him his penetrating glance, and seeing what a mere youth he was despite his stalwart frame, replied gruffly:

"Well, young man, and what do you want of me?"

The manifest ill-humor of the tone brought the color to Seth's cheeks; but he was not to be checked by it, and he came at once to the point by responding:

"I want to join your Rangers, sir."

The famous scout looked him over from head

to foot and then broke into a laugh that was so clearly contemptuous as to make Seth thrill with indignation, although he strove not to show it in his countenance.

"You want to join my Rangers, eh? And what good would such a youngster as you be to me? I want only men who can stand anything and are not afraid of anything."

Seth was too eager to gain his end to allow his temper to stand in his way, and so keeping himself under control he asked quietly:

"May I tell you what I did last month?"

There was something so firm yet respectful in his tone and prepossessing in his appearance that the Major began to relent a little, and to feel that he was hardly giving the young fellow fair treatment, so in a much milder way he answered:

"Very well, I'll listen. Come over here and we'll sit down," and he led the way to a sheltered corner of the fort.

When they were seated, Seth told about his scouting expedition with Reuben and what they had observed, and then, encouraged by the attention with which his narration was received, went on to express his own views as to what might be done if only the provincial authorities would act quickly and not wait until the French had made their position so strong that it would be out of the question to overcome them.

As he talked in his simple, frank way, Rogers was studying intently not only his face but his form, and from the different expression which gradually stole over his strong, stern features, it might be judged that he was being moved to change his mind concerning the speaker.

He listened in silence save for an occasional sharp query that went to the mark like a well-aimed arrow, and when Seth had finished seemed to be lost in reflection for so long a space that Seth began to get apprehensive as to the result of the interview.

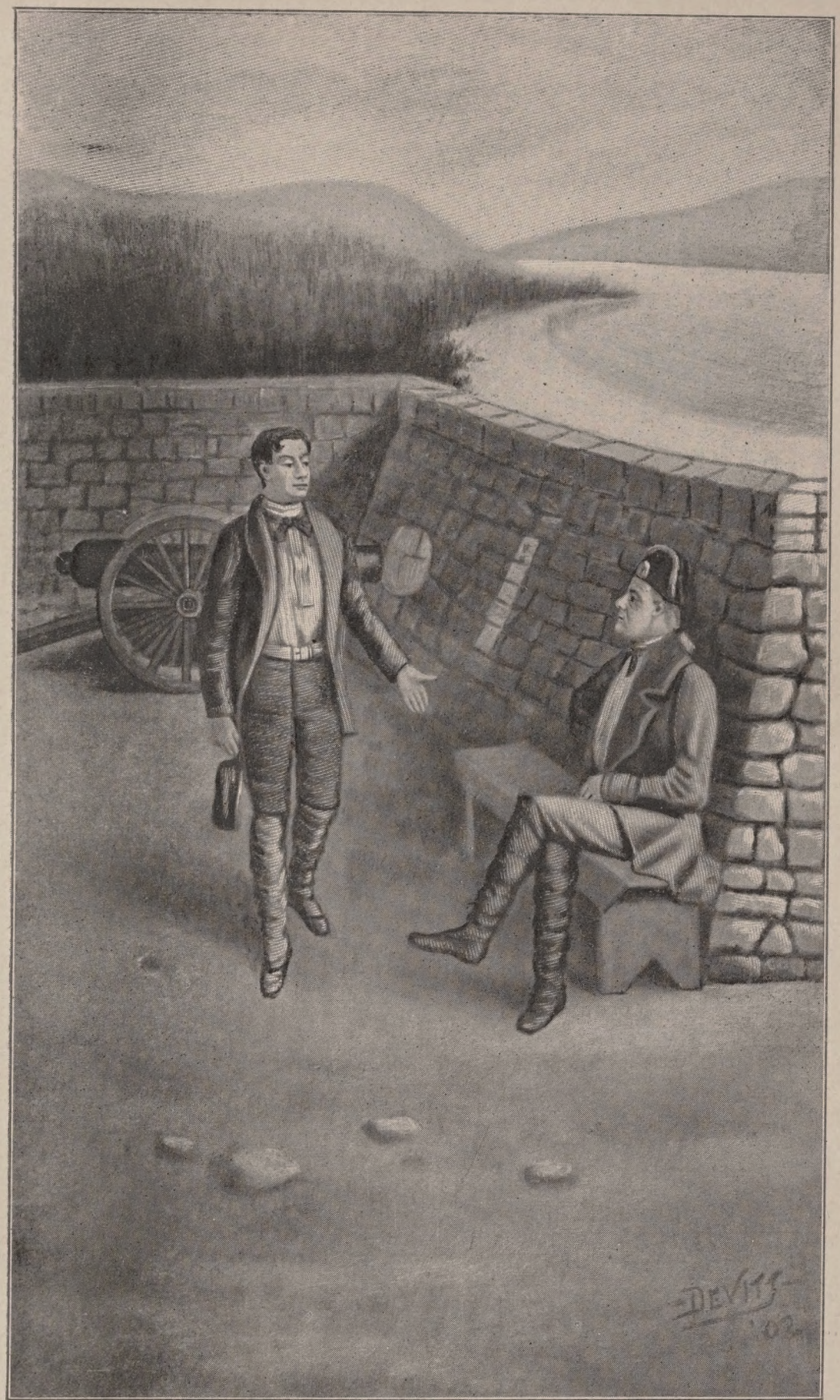
At length, fixing his piercing eyes upon the New Englander, he asked him in a voice so deep that it sounded hardly human:

"Is everything you have just told me the simple truth, or have you made up some of it?"

The flush deepened upon Seth's cheek and mounted to the roots of his hair. For one whose nature was so perfectly straightforward to be suspected of falsehood could not fail to hurt, and it made him wince; but he did his best to hide the fact, yet his tone was not altogether free from a touch of feeling as he replied:

"The simple truth, sir. I have made up nothing."

"Then, young man, you'll do!" exclaimed Rogers, with a sudden energy that made him start. "You're just what I want for my Rangers." And so saying, he gave him a heavy clap



"THE SIMPLE TRUTH, SIR! I HAVE MADE UP NOTHING."

on the back with his big hand by way of emphasizing his decision.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" cried Seth, springing to his feet, and fairly dancing in his delight. "I'm sick to death of poking about this fort doing nothing."

"Well, I reckon you won't have much chance to complain of that while you work for me," said Rogers dryly, and thus the matter was settled.

Seth's outfit of weapons was so complete that it needed no additions, and his dress required but little alteration to make it sufficiently similar to that of the Rangers.

His reception by his new associates was not unanimously cordial. Some of the older ones rather resented his being so young, and did not hesitate to find fault with the Major's judgment; but other were more kindly disposed, and made Seth welcome in their own hearty fashion.

The coming of the Rangers and the thrilling stories they had to tell of their perilous experiences proved a great boon to the garrison, and they were in no hurry to have them set off again. They were consequently well pleased when it was decided that the Rangers should make Fort William Henry their headquarters for the present.

No sooner had he been made a Ranger than Seth began to long for an outing with them, but it was not until the middle of January that the opportunity came.

Then to his joy Major Rogers selected him as one of a party of seventeen to reconnoitre the French forts.

They set out on skates, and made such good speed that ere night fell they had reached the part of the lake where it narrows greatly before joining its waters with those of Lake Champlain.

Here they halted for some hours in order to rest and eat, and then, in spite of the darkness, which troubled them little, for they seemed to be able to find their way through it without difficulty, they made a detour around Fort Ticonderoga, and went into ambush by the forest road connecting it with Crown Point.

Here with guns ready for instant use they waited to see what might pass along the road.

CHAPTER VII

REUBEN GETS INTO THE RANGERS ALSO

They did not have to wait long, for soon after sunrise two sledges, heavily laden with fresh beef, came into view, their drivers singing gayly in utter unconsciousness of the proximity of the enemy. They could easily have been shot as they sat on their sledges, but Rogers had other designs. He wanted them as prisoners for the sake of the information that might be extracted from them. So, at his command the Rangers suddenly showed themselves with levelled muskets, while their leader called to the drivers to stop.

The consternation of the latter was amusing to witness. They nearly fell off their seats, and made not the slightest attempt either at defending themselves or effecting their escape.

Seth, who had a keen sense of humor, thought their conduct highly diverting, and was one of the first to reach the sledges.

The poor fellows, when they realized into whose hands they had fallen, gave themselves up for lost. They evidently expected nothing else than to be killed at once, or to be reserved

for dreadful torture, and as Major Rogers himself was the only one of their captors who understood their language, their passionate pleading for mercy evoked no response from the others and intensified their terror.

Rogers regarded them grimly in silence for a time, and then gave orders that their hands should be tied behind their backs and that the beef they were in charge of be destroyed.

The Rangers would have been glad enough to keep the meat, which would have afforded a welcome variety in their monotonous diet at the fort; but it was out of the question for them to hamper themselves with it, as having accomplished the object of their expedition in the capture of two of the enemy, they must make all haste back to their own headquarters.

On being questioned by Rogers, the captured drivers told readily enough all they knew about the condition of things at Ticonderoga and Crown Point and the plans of the French for the future, and the information they gave was of such value that Major Rogers felt thoroughly satisfied with the result of the outing.

The command was given to return to Fort William Henry, which they reached in the evening of the third day without further incident.

Now, Reuben Thayer was no less anxious to be admitted into the ranks of the Rangers than Seth had been, and, having failed to gain his

point by direct application, he begged Seth to speak for him.

Seth shrank from doing so, because the Major was not easily approached, and had a gruff way with him; but at last, yielding to his friend's importunities, he made the venture.

He chose what he trusted would be an auspicious time—to wit, when the great man was enjoying his evening pipe after a hard day's tramp through the woods in quest of game, and with a degree of hesitation that was in itself a compliment, as indicating a fitting sense of the importance of the man he addressed, he said:

"Major Rogers, I have a favor to ask you."

"Have you, indeed?" answered the Major none too cordially, and evidently grudging the necessity of removing his pipe from his lips in order to speak. "What is it? Out with it, and don't stand there looking at me as if I were a wild cat or something!"

Poor Seth winced at this rough response, and found it harder than before to get out what he wanted to say, but he managed to stammer out:

"Reuben Thayer, sir, my friend, you know."

"No; I don't know your friend Reuben," retorted the Major impatiently. "But what about him? Explain yourself."

"If you please, sir, he wants to be one of your Rangers," Seth hastened to reply, devoutly

wishing that he had not undertaken the matter at all.

"Oh, he does, does he?" snorted the Major scornfully. "How good of him! And what if I don't want him? Who is he anyway, and what does he know about scouting?"

"Why, sir, he was with me that time I got so near Ticonderoga, and saw what they were doing there," Seth replied, with a sudden access of spirit, for Rogers' contemptuous way of speaking of his friend rather nettled him.

"Oh, ho! was he, indeed?" exclaimed the Major in a somewhat changed tone. "That makes a difference." Then, fixing his penetrating glance upon Seth, while a slight curve softened the severe outline of his lips, he demanded: "Do you think he's got as good stuff in him as you have, and that he'd be any use to me?"

Seth, now master of himself, felt free to smile back at the stern-visaged scout, who, he knew, was simply twitting him, and to respond in the same vein:

"If you'll only try him, sir, you'll find that he's better than I am, may be."

"Well, well, we'll see, we'll see," said the Major, resuming his pipe, and Seth, taking this as a sign that the interview was closed, went away to report to Reuben.

"And what do you think he'll do, Seth?" in-

quired Reuben anxiously. "Will he let me join?"

"I'm not quite sure, Reuben," was Seth's reply. "But I hope so. You'll just have to be patient."

The days slipped by without the Major taking any particular notice of Reuben, and the poor fellow was about resigning himself to disappointment when an incident occurred that brought about the fulfilment of his desire in an unexpected manner.

The English by no means had a monopoly of the scouting. The French on their part were hardly less active and venturesome, their Indian allies being particularly enterprising, and frequently making their way into the neighborhood of Fort William Henry, so that the members of the garrison had to keep a constant lookout for the merciless "hair-dressers," as they were facetiously called by their employers in allusion to their partiality for scalps.

When not out on one of his prolonged expeditions, Major Rogers, who could not keep still by any chance, was wont to spend the day roaming through the adjacent woods, sometimes in quest of game, and sometimes on the chance of lighting upon an Iroquois scout, and either taking him prisoner or putting an end to his activities.

In these outings he usually went alone, having

perfect confidence in his ability to take care of himself, and being of a disposition that did not need the constant companionship of his fellowmen.

One day late in January he had gone out to amuse himself in his accustomed way, and as it happened Seth and Reuben, whose friendship strengthened as the weeks went by, were also in the woods, hoping to bag a few partridges to vary their monotonous diet of bacon and peas.

In this they had fair success, and, having ventured as far from the fort as they thought wise, were on their way back when they caught sight of Major Rogers at a little distance.

"See, there's the Major!" exclaimed Reuben, catching his companion's arm and pointing out the tall form of the scout half hidden among the trees. "I wonder if he's after partridges too, and if he has had any better luck than we. Shall we call to him?"

"No, indeed," replied Seth emphatically. "He does not want our company. He prefers his own."

"Then let us see if we can keep him in sight for a while without his seeing us," suggested Reuben.

"All right," responded Seth, to whom the idea seemed a capital one, and accordingly they proceeded to stalk the Major, who, all uncon-

scious of their proximity, was entirely absorbed in his own thoughts.

Taking the utmost care not to betray themselves, they followed him for some distance, having no more definite purpose than simply to see if they could do so without being discovered, and were quite enjoying the joke of it when Reuben gave a sudden start, and, pulling Seth down to the ground beside him, whispered in his ear:

"I see Indians! They're just over there, and Major Rogers is going right toward them."

"Where? Where?" asked Seth excitedly. "Show them to me!"

Reuben pointed off to the right of where they lay, and Seth, fixing his eyes upon the spot, was able to make out the dark forms of at least two Indians crouching among the trees with the evident design of ambushing the Major.

For the moment he knew not what to do—whether to warn the Major, or to try a long shot at the Indians, and while he hesitated Reuben acted.

Springing to his feet in entire disregard of the danger he ran by thus exposing himself, he shouted:

"Down, sir, down! The Indians!"

His voice rang out amid the stillness of the forest with the clearness of a trumpet call, and the veteran scout, without pausing an instant to ascertain whence it came, and where the danger

warned against lay, instantly threw himself flat upon the ground.

It was well for him he did. The sudden action certainly saved his life, for close upon Reuben's timely shout came the report of a gun, and a bullet whistled viciously past the very spot where the Major had been standing.

Like an echo another report followed the first. It was from the gun of Seth, who had been watching intently the movements of the Indians, and the moment the latter exposed themselves in their anxiety to kill Major Rogers he aimed and pulled trigger.

Although so quickly done as to be really nothing more than a snapshot, a piercing yell told that the deadly missile had reached its mark, and Seth chuckled as he hastened to reload, saying complacently:

"That settles one of them. Now for the other."

But the second Iroquois evidently had no idea of sharing the fate of his companion. More like a shadow than a creature of flesh and blood he stole through the underbrush, Reuben just managing to catch a glimpse of him as he vanished over the top of a ridge, and he called to the still prostrate Major:

"It's all right now, sir. One Indian is shot, and the other's run away."

With feelings somewhat divided between re-

lief at his escape from an ignominious death, and irritation at the undignified attitude he had been compelled to assume in order to save himself, Major Rogers got up, and stood gazing in grim silence at the young men who had hastened toward him, eager to be assured that he had suffered no harm.

His stern look checked the words that were on their lips, and when they had come within a few yards of him, they halted in some confusion, the Major's reception of them was so entirely different from what under the circumstances they were expecting.

For an appreciable, and so far as the two friends were concerned, quite embarrassing interval they stood thus looking at each other, and then Major Rogers spoke.

"Who was it saw the Indians first and gave me warning?" he asked in as severe a tone as if he were questioning a criminal.

"It was I, sir," meekly responded Reuben.

"Ah! And you're the youth that wants to join my company?" continued the Major, the hardness of his tone slightly relaxing. "Then ——" and here he paused, so that his words might have full effect — "you may consider yourself a member. You have done me a service that I shall be in no hurry to forget," and having thus delivered himself, he strode off in the direction of Fort William.

CHAPTER VIII

OFF TO CROWN POINT

It was with happy hearts that Seth and Reuben followed Major Rogers. Reuben rejoiced in having his great desire gratified, while Seth not only shared in his friend's joy, but was glad on his own account, because they would not now be separated, but could serve side by side against the enemy.

"I hope the Major will soon be starting out again," said Reuben, "and will take us both with him. I'm just longing to be off on a scout, ain't you, Seth?"

"Indeed I am," answered Seth. "It's so tiresome hanging around the fort. If the French or the Indians would only have a try at us now and then, I'd like it better."

This being their frame of mind, the delight with which they heard that Colonel Glasier had given instruction to Major Rogers to make as thorough as possible an examination of the strength of the enemy at Crown Point and the fortifications they were constructing there may be readily understood, and also how anxious they were to find out whether or not they would form part of the scouting party.

Upon this point they were kept in uncertainty until a short time before the Rangers were to set out, and they had almost resigned themselves to being left behind when to their vast relief the Major sent for them, and in his abrupt way commanded them to be ready to start in half an hour.

They had no trouble in obeying the order, and at the appointed time the scouting party, numbering fifty in all, marched away from the fort, every man in the best of spirits and ready for any adventure or danger that might be encountered.

At this time of year the bosom of the lake was so covered with snow that it was not possible to skate, and they took snowshoes instead, carrying them strapped upon their backs until they should be needed. Every one of Rogers' Rangers was almost as expert in the use of the snowshoes as were the Canadians, from whom they had learned their value, and Seth and Reuben were very glad that they had made themselves proficient in the art of the *raquette* during the days of inaction at the fort when they found they could keep their places in the swiftly moving party without any difficulty.

The route chosen by Major Rogers lay well to the west of Lake George, and for the first day the Rangers kept together, as there was slight chance of meeting with any of the enemy.

But on the following days more precautions against being ambushed were taken, the company breaking up into detachments, which followed one another at a little distance, the whole party reuniting at mid-day and at sundown.

By this shrewd arrangement the risk of them all falling into the hands of the enemy was greatly reduced, as those in the lead could give warning to those in the rear, and, though they might suffer themselves, enable their comrades to beat a retreat if the odds were all against them, or dash forward to the support of the vanguard if there was anything like equal terms to be had.

Advancing thus, they made their way undiscovered and unopposed through the trackless forest, startling the wild beasts from their lairs, and flushing many a covey of plump partridges, which strongly tempted them to use their guns; but their leader had sternly forbidden the firing of a shot except at the enemy. He was not going to have his presence betrayed for the sake of a bit of game.

Seth and Reuben managed to keep together and yet to extend their acquaintance among the members of the band. For the most part they found them congenial companions, although all were their seniors in age as well as in service, and the gatherings around the campfire at night, when pipes were out and stories swapped, were

very pleasant after the long day's tramping over rough ground.

At length, seven days after setting out from the fort, they arrived within a mile of Crown Point, and, having concealed themselves in a thickly wooded hollow, where they were open to attack from only one direction, they awaited the further direction of their commander.

Every man fully realized the peril of the situation, and yet they were all in the highest spirits.

"I wonder how long it will take the French to find out we are so near them," said Seth to Reuben, with a smile of unconcern. "What wouldn't they give to know just where we are! I suppose they'd see how soon they could surround us and take us all prisoners."

"That would be their game most likely," responded Reuben, no less lightly; "but they're not going to do it all the same. The Major knows too much to be caught like a rat in a trap."

While the main body remained in the hollow, scouts were kept on all sides to give warning if the enemy should appear, and in the mean while Major Rogers, accompanied by a couple of his most trusted Rangers, ventured to ascend a very steep mountain, from the summit of which they could obtain a clear and full view of the fortification at Crown Point and of the surrounding country.

The Major was highly pleased at gaining this point of view without being discovered.

"Ah, ha!" he chuckled, as lying down upon his stomach, he peered over the peak and saw the whole place spread out before him like a map, with the French soldiers and the Canadians working away as busily as beavers, while the Indians loafed lazily about, or sat curled up in their blankets, as if they were quite above mere manual labor.

"Wouldn't it give our French friends a start if they knew we were watching them? And what a fine fort they are building, to be sure! I must make a plan of it to send to General Johnson. It's clear to me the place can't be attacked too soon. The longer it's left the harder nut it will be to crack. I must make the General understand that," and he shook his head in the decisive way that was characteristic of him.

The position of the Rangers exposed them to the full power of the wind and cold, but Major Rogers proceeded to make his plan of the fortification as calmly as if he were in a comfortable room, and did not stop until he had, in a rather rough yet quite intelligible fashion, completed a sketch that would be of great value in the event of an assault being made by the provincial forces in the future.

The rest of the Rangers "lay low" in their snug hiding-place, while their leader was in the

mountain-top, but so soon as he returned they all moved out and made their way toward a little village situated about half a mile from the fort.

Here, just before night fell, they went into ambush, one-half the party taking their position on each side of the road connecting the village with the fort, and settling down for the night as best they could on the snow-covered ground.

Seth and Reuben curled up as close to each other as possible for mutual warmth, and feeling it impossible to sleep on account of the cold, talked through the long hours of darkness.

With the first break of day the Rangers were all awake and astir, staying their hunger with such scanty fare as their nearly depleted knapsacks provided, and seeing to it that their guns were ready for instant use.

"Do not fire if you can help it, but make prisoners of whoever comes along the road," was the Major's command, and with their nerves strung up to the highest pitch of excitement they waited for victims.

Presently a Frenchman came into sight from the direction of the fort, sauntering along in blissful ignorance of danger.

He was allowed to go unchallenged until well into the ambush, and then Major Rogers, without permitting himself to be seen, called out in his deep gruff voice:

"Arrêtez!"

The soldier jumped as if he had been shot at this startling interruption of his morning walk and came to an instant stop, while with bulging eyes he stared in the direction whence the sound had come.

In order to make sure that the man was alone Major Rogers kept himself and his men hidden for a few minutes longer, and then, when he was satisfied on that point, ordered Seth to go forward and seize the Frenchman.

On the latter perceiving only a youth coming toward him he regained his courage somewhat, and showed signs of resisting, but the stern voice of the Major bid him not be a fool, and the next instant the forms of fifty armed men appeared on either side of the road.

This sight so terrified the poor fellow that he dropped upon his knees and in his own tongue begged for mercy so piteously that Seth as he laid hold of him was moved to say:

"Don't be so scared. We're not going to kill you. We're just taking you prisoner."

The soldier could not understand his words, but he could the tone in which they were uttered, and, looking into the face of his captor, he said something which Seth on his part failed to comprehend, but which really was a passionate promise to do whatever they wanted of him if only they would spare his life.

"Bring him in here out of sight and don't

stand there palavering," roared the Major, and Seth, whose attention had for the moment been diverted by the Frenchman's flutterings, laid hold of him by the shoulder and pushed him off the road into the trees, where he was promptly bound and gagged so that he could not give them any trouble.

"That's one fish caught," said the Major grimly. "We'll see if we can't land some more before the place gets too hot for us."

For the next hour no sign of life showed upon the road, and the Rangers began to grow restless, as was natural enough, considering that they were in so close proximity to the enemy, who might at any time come out against them in such force that they could not hope to offer any opposition, but must seek safety in flight.

At length, just when one of the Rangers had been sent across the road by Major Rogers with a message for those on the other side, two more Frenchmen appeared walking rapidly, as if upon an important mission.

"Look sharp now and nab those two fellows!" called the Major to his men, but before they could obey the order the Frenchmen had caught sight of the Ranger crossing the road.

Instantly they saw their danger, and, turning upon their heels, started on the full run back to the fort.

"Catch them! Catch the scoundrels!" roared

the Major, furious at the possibility of their escaping him, and half a score of the Rangers set off in pursuit, Seth and Reuben being among the number.

But good runners though they were, the fugitives were also fleet of foot, and, moreover, they had the advantage of a considerable start, and thus they managed to keep out of reach of their pursuers (who did not dare use their guns, as the report would be heard at Crown Point), until they got so near the fort that the Rangers were fain to abandon the chase lest they themselves should be ambushed and cut off from their companions.

Accordingly, much chagrined, they hastened back to where Major Rogers awaited them with a face like a thundercloud.

"So you let them get away from you, eh?" he growled. "You're no better than cows to run. You'd better practise up your running."

"We'll leave that to the Frenchies, Major," responded Lieutenant Stark brightly. "We don't want to know how to run, but to stand and fight."

Instead of being incensed at this courageous sally, the Major allowed a suspicion of a smile to lighten the gloom of his countenance, and with a decided change of tone said:

"That's all right, Stark, as a general thing; but I reckon we'll show more sense by doing a

little running ourselves just now than by staying here. Those two Frenchies will soon have the whole garrison out after us."

There was no gainsaying the soundness of this, and so without more ado the whole body of Rangers beat a retreat into the depths of the forest, to remain there hidden until they could be sure that they were not being hunted for by the garrison of Crown Point.

CHAPTER IX

DOING DAMAGE TO THE ENEMY

ALTHOUGH Major Rogers had entirely succeeded in the chief purpose of his expedition, namely, to obtain a full understanding of what the French were about at Crown Point, and had, moreover, captured one of their soldiers, who was quite ready to tell all he knew, provided his life was spared, he was not content to return to Fort William Henry without leaving behind evidence of his visit that would make it remembered by the enemy. Accordingly, after what he deemed a sufficient period of lying low, he said to his men:

"If I'm not mistaken there's a good store of grain in that village, which, as we can't take it away with us, we'll have to burn up so that the Frenchies and their friends won't have it to depend upon, and we might kill off a few of their cattle, too. They mustn't be allowed to live too well here or they'll be too anxious to stay."

The Rangers laughed at their leader's way of putting things, and replied that they were ready to do whatever he had in mind.

"Let us take a good look at the village, then,

and see where it's best to begin," said the Major.

Breaking up into parties of ten, they advanced upon the village from different directions, and at sight of them the terrified inhabitants fled to their houses, in which they shut themselves without any thought of offering resistance.

"I hope we won't have to set the houses on fire," whispered Seth to Reuben as they drew near a rude dwelling, which he judged sheltered women and children. "I don't mind how many barns we burn, but I don't want to have a hand in hurting the poor people."

"Oh, surely Major Rogers won't do anything to them!" Reuben exclaimed under his breath. "We're not Indians."

They had no need to be anxious upon this score, however, for the Major, while merciless enough in his methods where it seemed necessary to be so, had no thought of following the shocking example set by the French in their harrying of the borders. He waged war against men, not against women and children.

But as much damage as possible had to be done, so the torch was applied to the barns, and the cattle were killed in the yards, and when the Rangers departed they left that part of the village in flames.

"What can the garrison of the fort be about

that they haven't come after us?" queried Reuben naturally enough, when at last they turned their faces homeward; but no one could answer him. Whatever was the reason, whether they imagined the invaders to be in much greater force than they were, or whether they had no stomach to try a brush with them in the forest, certainly the French kept within their own defences and allowed the daring Rangers to go away unchallenged and unscathed, leaving the burning village as a hint of what they would do to Crown Point itself at the first opportunity.

Just ten days after they had set out they were back at Fort William Henry, whose commander warmly praised their leader for the success of his undertaking and the exceedingly important information he had secured.

A period of quiet followed, during which the garrison made shift to while away the time with such sports as were possible in mid-winter. They had snow fights, and snowshoe races, and they practised shooting at a mark, and they had wrestling matches, and whatever other amusements could be devised for either outdoor or indoors.

Into all this Seth entered with keen zest, and being so active and agile of both brain and body, rather more than held his own with the majority of his associates, which fact did not pass unno-

ticed by the all-observant Major, and no doubt had much to do with the pleasant surprise that he gave him when he sent for him one morning in March.

Seth found the Major in his room with a letter before him, from which he lifted his eyes to look him over with a searching glance that gave Seth a nervous feeling, and caused him to wonder in his mind what was on the carpet.

"Have you ever been to Boston, young man?" he was asked in a tone that afforded no hint of the purpose of the question.

"No, sir," replied Seth, "I have not."

"How would you like to go there?" was the next question.

Now to a frontier lad, who had never set foot in a city of any size, Boston naturally loomed very large and wonderful, and the idea of seeing it for himself could not be otherwise than highly attractive, so that it was without hesitation Seth answered:

"Why, very much indeed, sir. Do you want to send me there?"

"I don't want to *send* you, but I have some notion of *taking* you," the Major responded in his brusk way, and then went on to say that the letter in his hand was from General Shirley, Commander-in-Chief of the King's forces in North America, who was at Boston making preparations for the ensuing campaign, and had

desired Major Rogers to wait upon him at Boston to receive his instructions.

Seth listened with eager ears. To have the trip to Boston, and there to see not only the famous city, but the great General, under whose command the war would be carried on, this certainly was an opportunity such as he had not dreamed of, and his heart beat quickly as he waited for the Major's definite instructions. When they came, they were characteristically brief and to the point.

"I'll take you with me," he said. "You can be of use to me. We'll start this afternoon. Get your things packed and be ready right after dinner."

In great glee Seth hurried off to tell the good news to Reuben, who warmly congratulated him upon his good luck, while he frankly expressed his envy.

"I've been wanting to go to Boston for ever so long too. I wonder when my chance will come," he said ruefully. "You seem always to get the good things first."

"Oh! your turn will come all right!" responded Seth, patting him on the back. "We'll go to Boston together some fine day, see if we don't."

The summons of Major Rogers to the presence of the Commander-in-Chief aroused much curiosity at the fort, and many were the conjec-

tures as to what it meant, but if the veteran Ranger had any idea of his own he shrewdly kept it to himself.

They set out early in the afternoon, directing their course for Albany, on the Hudson River, and as the danger of being attacked by Indians in league with the French had to be considered, Major Rogers deemed it prudent to have ten of his Rangers accompany them that far, and then return to Fort William Henry.

To Seth, whose experience of the world was so slight, even Albany, then little more than a thriving town, was a revelation, and he would have been glad to spend some days there seeing the sights and getting acquainted with the people, but the Major was not the man to dally by the way. To him Albany was of slight consequence. Boston filled his mind, and if there had been any lightning express trains in that day as there are now connecting the two cities, he certainly would have taken the first one leaving the railway station.

But there was nothing better then than the lumbering stage coach, that jolted its slow way over the New Connecticut Road, as it was called, which wound its somewhat devious course from Albany to Boston.

"Confound the old rattle-trap!" growled the short-tempered Major as the heavy coach swayed and pitched over the rough coach road. "I wish

we had taken horse. We'd save time and have more comfort."

Seth, however, although he was too discreet to say so, did not at all agree with his chief. It was his first long ride in a stage coach, and it gratified a desire cherished from his earliest boyhood, and even if the vehicle was clumsy and the roads were rough, he was enjoying himself in no small degree.

From Albany to Springfield, thence to Brookfield, and so by Worcester and Marlborough the post road ran, but before reaching their destination in Boston they had an adventure which aptly illustrated the unwisdom of waking up the wrong passenger.

They travelled all night as well as all day, for the coach carried the mails, and about half-way between Worcester and Boston, on a particularly lonely spot, where the road lay along the bottom of a ravine, shut in by tree-clad hills, rising steeply on either side, the slow-going conveyance was suddenly brought to a full stop, in obedience to the command of two masked men on horseback, who covered the driver with their pistols as they sternly shouted:

"Stop! or we'll shoot you!"

Quite convinced that discretion was the better part of valor, the driver promptly reined up his horses, whereupon the men, dismounting from theirs, said roughly to the alarmed passen-

gers, most of whom had been awakened from a doze:

"Come now, hand over your purses, and be quick about it!"

None of them had been more soundly asleep than Major Rogers, and on first awaking he did not at once grasp the situation, so that Seth whispered in his ear:

"It's robbers, sir; they want our money."

At this the veteran scout understood, and instantly set his quick wits to work to meet the emergency.

"Don't speak or move until I tell you," he whispered to Seth, "but get your pistol ready."

The Major then lay back in his seat again, as though paralyzed with terror.

Meanwhile the other passengers were fumbling in their pockets and getting out their purses, one of the highwaymen holding a lantern up in his left hand so as to make sure that all were obeying orders.

Warmly wrapped as everybody was, with their purses and watches in their innermost pockets, the process of getting at them could not be a very quick one, and the highwaymen swore fiercely at them because they were not so expeditious as they thought they might be.

Not one of them made any show of resistance. They seemed thoroughly cowed by the levelled pistols, and when their valuables had been ex-

tracted from the depths of their pockets, handed them over to the rascals as meekly as if it was quite the proper thing to do.

At last only Major Rogers and Seth were left, and the larger of the two highwaymen, who was evidently the leader, emphasizing the order with a full-flavored oath, shouted at them:

"Now then, you two, hand over your money, and be quick about it!"

Without stirring in his seat the Major whispered to Seth:

"I'll take the man with the lantern. You take the other."

And then suddenly rising, he pointed with his left hand beyond the robbers and called out joyfully:

"There they are! They're just in time!"

CHAPTER X

TO BOSTON TOWN

INSTINCTIVELY the highwaymen turned their heads to see what Major Rogers meant, and as they did the latter, hissing through his clenched teeth:

"Now then, Seth. Shoot the scoundrels!" whipped out his pistol and fired, Seth doing likewise so promptly that the two reports sounded almost like one.

With a groan and a cry of agony the two wretches, mortally wounded, fell to the ground, dropping the lantern, which, of course, was at once extinguished, leaving everything in darkness.

Vastly relieved at this sudden and surprising change in the situation, the driver was about to whip up his horses and make off when the stern voice of the Major rang out:

"Hold there! Don't start until I bid you!"

The man dropped the whip and reined in the horses.

"Jump out, Seth, and find the lantern," was the Major's next order, which Seth made haste to execute.

The lantern was found and relit, and then the Major proceeded to examine the fallen men.

They were both dead already, the Rangers' aim, in spite of the imperfect light and quickness of action, having been unerring, and as the Major regarded them with an expression, curiously blended, of triumph and pity, he said grimly:

"You poor fools! You've got your deserts, but you should have known better than to try and rob *me*."

The emphasis he put upon the last word was not lost upon his fellow-passengers, who looked at one another sheepishly, for they now felt thoroughly ashamed of their cowardice, and they hastened to cover their confusion by volubly expressing their gratitude to the Major for his gallant conduct.

"Recover your purses and watches, gentlemen," was his only response, however, and when that had been done, and the bodies of the two ill-starred highwaymen had been decently disposed of at the side of the road to await the action of the authorities, who would be informed in due course, the coach resumed its journey.

After they had settled down again in their seats Seth got a chance to ask the question which had been on his lips:

"Whom did you mean, sir, when you said: 'There they are! They're just in time!' and pointed behind the robbers?"

Major Rogers chuckled complacently.

"Whom do you think I meant? Why nobody, of course. It was just a ruse to fool the rascals and get them to turn their heads so that we could fire first. And how easily they were taken in!" and he chuckled again at the success of his scheme.

Seth's admiration for his commander was vastly increased by this fresh proof of his courage and resourcefulness, and as for the other passengers, they professed that he was a perfect hero, and that no words of praise were too strong for what he had done.

At last the tiresome journey came to an end, and as the coach lumbered through the tortuous streets of Boston Seth's heart beat high with expectation. He was now in the big city, and the days before him could not fail to be full of novelty and interest.

They put up at a comfortable tavern where the Major was well known, and the best accommodation the house afforded was placed at his disposal. It was a very ordinary establishment, and in no wise resembled a modern hotel; but to Seth's untravelled eyes it seemed quite grand and the substantial fare that burdened the tables sumptuous indeed.

The morning after their arrival Major Rogers said:

"I have certain business to attend to that will

take me the best part of the day and you will have to look after yourself. You'd better go out and see the town, but mind where you go, and don't get lost. I'll be back by supper-time."

"All right, sir," responded Seth cheerily, much pleased at the idea of being left to his own devices. "I'll take good care of myself."

After the Major, attired in his best uniform, had set out, Seth inquired the way to the water-side, for he was first of all anxious to see the shipping.

He found the wharves crowded with shipping, and was immensely interested in the bustle and noise as the sailors, with many a shout and song, toiled away at loading or unloading the cargoes. It was all new to him, and he did not hesitate to ask many questions of the weather-beaten men, some of whom answered him civilly enough, while others were decidedly gruff, and others still, rightly judging that he was a country lad, tried to run rigs on him.

But Seth was too shrewd to be fooled very far. He understood pretty well when he was being answered correctly, and he picked up a good deal of information as he strolled about in an apparently aimless way.

One of the largest ships which hailed from England was discharging a cargo of general goods bewildering in variety, and as Seth talked with one of the sailors he was thinking to himself:

"How I'd like to go across the ocean to England and see everything there! It must be a wonderful place. I wonder will I ever have the chance."

The possibility of his realizing his desire seemed remote enough, but that fact did not trouble him, and he made a mental resolution to get over to the Mother Land some day, however distant it might be.

His pleasant meditations were at this point interrupted by cries of pain and terror, coming from a boy who was evidently being cruelly treated, and instinctively he hastened to see what was the matter.

On the other side of a great pile of casks he found a hulking fellow of the wharf-rat genus ill-using a small boy who was vainly endeavoring to escape from his clutches.

Instantly his ire was aroused, and without taking thought of the consequences, but simply obeying the chivalrous impulse to rescue the little victim from the ruffian, he sprang forward, and, seizing the latter by the shoulders, flung him upon his back, at the same time saying to the released boy:

"Run now! I'll not let the brute follow you!"

The little chap at first obeyed, but had not gone many yards ere he stopped and looked back, being anxious to see how it fared with his timely rescuer.

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The wharf rat had been so taken by surprise and thrown so hard that for a moment he lay prostrate and breathless, but the next moment he was up, and with a foul oath hurled himself upon Seth, who had stood his ground so as to protect the flight of the boy.

So far as size and weight went the ruffian had decidedly the best of it, and if Seth had permitted him to get at close grips and fight in his own rough and tumble fashion, it certainly might have gone hard with him.

But he had more sense than to do that. He rightly judged his assailant's purpose, and when the latter was almost upon him, sprang quickly aside and thrust out his foot, at the same time landing with his right fist upon the fellow's head.

Down he went again, this time forward instead of backward, and now, utterly infuriated, he seized a large stone as he rose, and was about to hurl it at Seth, who could hardly have evaded the missile at such short range, when his arm was grasped by a newcomer upon the scene, who said to him sternly:

"Drop that, you rascal! If you don't fight fair, I'll throw you into the dock."

With a wolfish snarl he turned upon the speaker, as though he would strike him with the stone, but his uplifted hand dropped quickly, and there was something of a whine in his tone as he said:

"What did he hit me for? I wasn't doing nothing to him."

"Why did you hit him?" inquired the man of Seth. "What mischief was he up to?"

"He was beating that boy, sir," answered Seth promptly, "and I interfered. He had no business to be hurting a little fellow like that."

"Ah, ha, just as I supposed, you miserable cur!" and as he spoke the wharfinger, who had kept hold of the bully, gave him a good shake. "Now, look here, if you're so anxious to use your fists, why don't you take some one of your own size? I dare say this stranger would not object to having a round or two with you if you want it."

Seth smiled and nodded his head. Assured of fair play by the presence of the wharfinger, he was indignant enough with the bully to feel quite in the humor of giving him a good pummelling.

Not so, however, the other. He had already had sufficient taste of Seth's quality to show him that he was an antagonist by no means to be despised, and instead of accepting the challenge thus offered, he hung down his head and slunk off out of sight, while the wharfinger, chuckling at his discomfiture, turned to Seth and asked him courteously if there was anything he could do for him, as he seemed to be a stranger.

"No, thank you, sir," Seth responded brightly. "I'm just amusing myself looking around. I never saw big ships before. I've always lived in the country."

"And I suppose everything about here is very new and strange to you," the wharfinger broke in. "Come along with me and I'll explain things a bit and then you'll understand better."

Nothing could have suited Seth better. He had been puzzled by many things he saw, but shrank from asking questions of the busy men about him, but now, thanks to his new acquaintance, all would be made clear.

The wharfinger asked him some questions about himself, and was evidently much interested when he learned that he was a member of Rogers' Rangers, the fame of whose exploits had reached even to Boston.

"And you say Major Rogers is in Boston now," he exclaimed. "Well, well! I must try and see him. I should esteem it an honor to shake hands with the man who has done such wonderful things if all accounts of him be true."

Seth assured him that the Major was quite as great a hero as he was reported to be, and added that if the wharfinger would come up to the tavern that evening he would introduce him to the great man.

This suggestion pleased the wharfinger very much, and so in great mutual good humor

they began their round of the ships and warehouses.

This was pure enjoyment for Seth. He asked as many questions as a school-boy, and to every one of them received an enlightening answer. They went on board several of the ships, descending into their holds and visiting their cabins, and chatting with their officers, some of whom showed them hearty hospitality, and altogether it was a rich experience to Seth, whose keen eyes took in everything, while his active mind stored away what he heard, and he said to himself exultantly:

"Won't I have a lot to tell Reuben and the rest of them at the fort when I go back."

One of the captains whose vessel they boarded, just at mid-day, insisted upon their sitting down to dinner with him, and after some demur they consented, because it seemed easier to do so than to refuse him, and it was consequently well into the afternoon ere Seth was able to get away from his new friends and return to the tavern, where he found Major Rogers wondering what had become of him.

The Major was in high feather, and, although not ordinarily inclined to be communicative, after cutting short Seth's account of the way he had spent the morning, he proceeded to relate with great gusto how it had fared with him.

It seemed that his reception by General Shir-

ley was very cordial, and the Commander-in-Chief had said many flattering things about the value of his services as a pleasant preliminary to the highly gratifying information that he had decided to give him the command of an independent company of Rangers, and he was to wait upon him the following morning in order to receive his commission and instructions for future action.

"Why, isn't that fine!" Seth exclaimed, his countenance glowing with pride and pleasure, for he heartily shared in his leader's feeling. "You will be your own master now, won't you, and do just what you like?"

"To a certain extent, yes," responded the Major complacently, "but not entirely. I shall have, of course, to work together with those in command at the forts, but my Rangers will have no one to obey but myself."

"And what is the great General like?" Seth asked, with boyish curiosity. "Is he very big and splendid, and everything grand about him?"

Major Rogers smiled indulgently at his young companion.

"I don't think I'll tell you. I'll leave you to judge for yourself. You can come with me tomorrow morning when I go to get my commission."

"Oh! can I?" cried Seth, his face radiant at

the prospect. "You are very good. I'll be so glad to go."

That evening the wharfinger called as he had promised, and Seth, now prouder of his chief than ever, lost no time in telling him of the new honors conferred upon the Major ere he led him into his presence.

The two men were soon on easy terms, and Seth keenly enjoyed their conversation as they exchanged experiences, the one being so familiar with the life of the sea and the other with the life of the forest. Altogether it was a memorable day for the backwoods youth, and yet as he lay down to sleep it was with lively anticipation of yet more notable events which the morrow held in store for him.

CHAPTER XI

SETH RECEIVES PROMOTION

It was with scrupulous care that Seth dressed himself on the following morning. To be sure, he had only his simple Ranger uniform to wear, but he took pains to be as neat as possible, and it became his shapely sinewy figure so well that more than one of those he met on the street turned to have a second look at him, and to wonder to what regiment he belonged.

Major Rogers was in high spirits, and talked freely as they walked at a good pace to Government House.

"You may consider yourself pretty lucky to have had this trip to Boston, Seth," he said in a tone of paternal patronage, that showed he wished his companion fully to appreciate his good fortune. "Not many of my men have ever been here, and none of them I'm sure has ever seen the Governor, and you will not only see him, but may have a chance to speak to him."

"I do, indeed, think myself lucky, and I'm more obliged to you for bringing me here than I can tell you, sir," responded Seth, with a conviction that left no doubt as to his sincerity and

quite satisfied the Major, who smiled in a kindly way upon him, and, patting him on the shoulder, said:

"That's all right, Seth. I brought you along just because I thought you'd get more good out of the trip than almost any of the other fellows, and I guess I haven't made a mistake."

This implied compliment warmed Seth's heart and helped to brace him up for the ordeal of appearing before the famous Governor, of whom he had heard so much.

They were promptly ushered into the great man's presence. Governor Shirley, Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's forces in North America, although now well past sixty years of age, had lost little of his vigor and none of his enterprise, and, despite his being a lawyer by profession, took a keener interest in martial matters than in anything else. The one supreme ambition of his life was to overthrow the French power and make the whole North American continent an English possession, and to the fulfilment of this great purpose he devoted himself with an energy and determination that were altogether admirable.

In Major Rogers he had a man after his own heart—one who shared to the full his hatred of the French, and his passionate desire to see them driven back across the Atlantic, and he did not hesitate to say that had he only been a

younger man he would have liked nothing better than to become a Ranger himself, and pit his daring and skill in scouting against French and Indian wiles.

His reception, therefore, was entirely gracious, and when the Major presented Seth, who felt very much abashed, he said to him genially:

"And so this is one of your young men, Major. He seems to be made of the right stuff."

Then, addressing Seth, he added: "How do you like being a Ranger? Do you prefer it to being in the ranks?"

Seth lifted his head and with glowing countenance replied heartily:

"Yes, indeed, your Excellency; I never want to be anything else than a Ranger."

"That speaks well for your method of command, Major," said the Governor, with a smile. "If all your men held the same opinion, there is no fear of them failing in their duty or loyalty, and now if our young friend will withdraw I will have a word with you alone."

Seth, though greatly pleased at the Governor's kind words, was glad enough to return to the ante-room, where, in conversation with one of the aides-in-waiting, he passed the time until Major Rogers came out again.

On their way back to the tavern the Major gave him the further particulars of his interview and the instructions he had received. His com-

pany was to be composed of sixty privates, three sergeants, an ensign, and a lieutenant, and they must all be picked men, thoroughly used to forest life, and of unquestionable courage and fidelity.

"My brother Richard will, of course, be my lieutenant," he went on with a keen look at Seth, who was listening intently, "but I have not yet quite settled who will be ensign. Who do you think would be the best man?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Seth quite innocently, for he had no glimmering of the Major's drift. "I expect any of the men would be glad to be ensign."

"How would you like it yourself, my lad?" asked the Major, laying his hand upon his shoulder.

Seth started and flushed to the roots of his hair. That the choice should fall upon him had not entered his head, yet there was evident earnestness in his chief's tone.

"I?" he exclaimed, half incredulously. "I'm not fit. I don't know enough. I'm too young."

The Major smiled approvingly, for he liked his spirit of modesty.

"What you don't know, you can learn, and you'll learn all the better for being young. I think I'll give you a trial anyway."

Seth could hardly believe his ears. It seemed too good to be true, and yet he knew the Major too well to suspect him of jesting.

"You are very good, sir," he faltered. "I will do my best to please you, and if I fail, then you must try somebody else."

"All right then, that's a bargain," laughed the Major. "I'll appoint you my ensign, and if you should not prove yourself fit for the position, I'll be free to try somebody else."

And thus the matter, which meant so much to Seth, was settled, and he went back to Fort William Henry in an even happier frame of mind than he had left it the fortnight before, and fairly bursting with eagerness to tell Reuben Thayer all about his trip, and how wonderfully well Major Rogers had treated him.

Reuben was impatiently awaiting his friend's return, and having a nature entirely free from petty jealousy, heartily shared in his joy and pride, at the same time expressing the hope that Seth's altered rank would make no difference in their friendship.

"No, indeed, Reuben," responded Seth emphatically. "We'll be just the same friends as ever I'm sure, even if sometimes you have to take orders from me, for, of course, we will both of us just be doing our duty."

With his wonted promptitude and energy Major Rogers set about forming his company. There was no lack of material. At Albany as well as at the fort the men offered themselves in numbers. The difficulty was to pick and choose.

In this the Major allowed no other consideration than the personal qualifications of the man to influence him. He would have nothing but the best, and when he had finished his task, he certainly had gathered together a band of forest fighters whose superiors could hardly have been found throughout the province.

A proper allowance for equipment having been made by the Commander-in-Chief, the Rangers were fitted out with everything necessary, and presented a really fine appearance when they were paraded at Fort William Henry.

Major Rogers surveyed them with pride and pleasure, that he took no pains to conceal, lighting up his usually stern features.

"They're a likely lot," he said to Colonel Glasier, "and after they have had a season of it with me, they'll give the French all the trouble they want and more too."

"No doubt—no doubt," assented the Colonel, none too cordially, for, to tell the truth, he was a trifle jealous of Rogers' Company, and inclined to think that too much was being made of them.

Major Rogers quite understood this, but was too shrewd to appear to do so. It suited him best to keep on good terms with the other officers, and particularly with those in command of the forts, and he took care to avoid all ground of friction.

At this full dress parade, for so it might be considered, he read to his men for the first time the instructions received from Commander Shirley, and they certainly outlined an extensive programme that afforded unlimited scope for daring enterprise.

They ran in part as follows:

"You are from time to time to use your best endeavors to distress the French and their allies by sacking, burning, and destroying their houses, barns, barracks, canoes, batteaux, etc., and by killing their cattle of every kind, and at all times to endeavor to waylay, attack, and destroy their convoys of provisions, by land and by water, in any part of the country where you can find them."

"Plenty of work there, and lots of danger too," remarked Seth to Reuben when the reading of the instructions, to which they had been attentively listening, was over.

"Yes, indeed; but I don't mind that, and I don't care how soon we are given something to do. We've been shut up in this old fort so long that I'm sick of it," was Reuben's characteristic response.

As it happened, they had not much longer to bide their time, for presently Major Rogers received orders to see what the enemy were about at Crown Point, and he set off thither with a part of his company.

Although spring was at hand, the snow still lay deep in the densest parts of the forests, and it was wet and mushy in other parts, so that the Rangers could not make as rapid progress as they wanted, and the first week of May had nearly ended ere they reached the eastern shores of Lake Champlain, about four miles south of Crown Point.

"Now, Rangers," said their leader, "we'll hide our packs here so as not to be weighted by them, and then push ahead until we get as near Crown Point as we can without being seen."

Considering how completely they were in their enemies' country, and how easy it would be for the latter, if they discovered them, to surround them and cut off their retreat, the light-hearted way in which they obeyed orders certainly betokened an indifference to danger that was almost heroic. They literally held their lives in their hands, and yet not a trace of anxiety or concern showed upon their countenances.

Advancing cautiously two miles farther, they came to a little village, which appeared to be deserted, for not a sign of life could they make out.

But the Major was too sagacious a scout to take anything for granted. The silent village might be only a cleverly designed trap, into which he had not the slightest notion of falling.

"Seth," he said to his Ensign, "take five men

with you and reconnoitre that place. The rest of us will stay here until you have found out all you can about it."

Well pleased at being chosen for this perilous service, Seth quickly named his men, one of them, of course, being Reuben, and then, dividing them up into three couples, directed how they should approach the village from different directions.

Taking advantage of every bit of cover, the Rangers crept toward the little group of log houses which composed the village, not knowing at what moment there might come spurts of smoke from their windows, and the crack of muskets be followed by the whistle of bullets.

But the strange silence of the place continued, until at last Seth felt convinced that it was really untenanted, and, rising to his feet, said:

"Come on, Reuben, there's nobody there."

It seemed a rash proceeding, but he had made no mistake. The village was deserted, although it showed signs of recent occupation, and when, in response to Seth's signal, the rest of the Rangers came up, they ransacked it thoroughly without finding anything of value, not even a morsel of food, which they would have been very glad to get.

"I don't quite understand this," said Major Rogers, tugging at his beard. "The place is all

right to live in—why, then, should they abandon it?"

"Perhaps they're expecting us to attack them, and they've all gone into the fort," Seth suggested.

"I reckon it must be something like that," the Major assented, "and if it wouldn't give the alarm over there and bring the garrison out after us, like hornets from their nest, I'd set these houses on fire. But I'll have to leave them for the present."

So the silent village was spared, and the Rangers returned to the lakeside, opposite to Crown Point where they lay in hiding the whole of the day following in the hope that some of the enemy might cross the lake and fall into their hands. But they waited in vain, for none of the French came within their reach.

A little before sundown a regular fleet of batteaux and canoes appeared. They had evidently come from St. Johns, on the north, and carried not less than 500 men.

At the sight of them the Major's face grew troubled and he shook his head, muttering:

"The first batch, no doubt, and many more to follow. They'll be having more men at Crown Point by midsummer than we'll have at Albany."

Dangerous as their situation was, the Rangers remained there one more night, and the next

morning killed a number of cattle that were roaming about, taking only their tongues, as they could not burden themselves with the meat.

They had just finished a very much needed and refreshing repast on these when Reuben, who had been to the shores, hurried back, crying:

"They're coming after us! A dozen canoes full of French and Indians are crossing right towards us! We've not a minute to lose!"

Major Rogers took one quick look, to make sure that Reuben was right, and then ordered his men to scatter through the forest and find their way by different routes to where they had hidden their packs.

CHAPTER XII

FROM PERIL TO PERIL

THE Rangers would, of course, have much preferred keeping together, but they quite understood the wisdom of their leader's plan, and dutifully did as they were told.

Seth struck off to the east, with the idea of making a long detour and then steering straight for the rendezvous. He could get through the forest at a surprising rate of speed, and ere many minutes had passed had put such a distance between himself and the enemy that he had little to fear from their pursuit.

But they were not the only source of danger. He knew well that the whole country round about was being constantly traversed by scouting parties of Indians in the pay of the French, and if he should be captured by any of them he was far more likely to be made the victim of their fiendish ingenuity as torturers, and to be finally tomahawked and scalped, than to be delivered over to the French as a prisoner of war.

Still he did not allow these thoughts, disquieting as they were, to depress his spirit. The dangers that threatened were just what were to be

expected, and so long as he continued a member of Rogers' band they would have to be faced.

"The Major was right enough, of course, in making us scatter like this," he said to himself philosophically, "but all the same I'll be everlastingly glad when we all get together again."

Guided by his compass he pursued his lonely way through the forest until sundown, and then looked about for some snug spot in which to pass the night.

It was cold enough to render a fire almost a necessity, but, although he had a well-equipped tinder-box, he did not attempt to make a blaze, lest it should betray him to some skulking Indians.

A small portion of ox tongue, cold and tasteless, served him for supper, and he lay down on some moss at the roots of a big tree to pass the long hours of the night as best he could.

The cold chilled him to the marrow, and hunger gnawed at his vitals. The forest that was so silent during the day now gave forth sinister sounds as the birds and beasts of prey hunted eagerly for victims. First far off and then nearer, one answering to another, the blood-curdling howl of wolves echoed through the darkness, and Seth, shivering with cold, hugged his trusty gun tightly, and hoped that the fierce brutes would not scent him.

He wondered where the others were, and

what distance separated him from them. If only Reuben were with him, his situation would not be quite so miserable; but Reuben had taken a southerly direction, and was no doubt miles away at the moment.

The horrid howling of the wolves drew nearer, and the unpleasant conviction began to force itself upon him that they had found him out and were of a mind to hold a nocturnal banquet on his body.

"They'll have to pay dearly for their supper," he soliloquized grimly, "for I'll kill as many of them as I can first, but if the pack is a big one, they're bound to get me in the end, unless"—and at the idea his heart leaped and the blood coursed warmly through his veins—"I keep them off with a big fire. I'll do it and risk the Indians being round."

With trembling fingers he went to work and, of course, the first attempts to light the dry moss with a spark from his tinder-box failed, but he tried again and again, and at last succeeded in starting a tiny flame, which he sedulously fanned into a blaze.

There was no lack of fuel at hand, and, piling this on, he presently had a glowing fire, that lit up the far-reaching forest aisles, and revealed the proximity of the wolves by being reflected in their gleaming eyeballs.

"Just in time!" he ejaculated fervently.

"They'll keep their distance so long as the fire lasts, but if it goes out, they'll be on me quick."

If he had had only the wolves to consider, he would have seized the opportunity to do execution amongst them that they afforded by sitting upon their haunches and gazing hungrily at him; but the report of his gun might betray him to the enemy if any of them were within hearing of it, and so he was fain to content himself with speculating how many of them he might kill before the pack would have the sense to take to flight.

The fire burned so brightly that, in spite of the purpose for which it was lit, he found it cheering to his spirit, but it required a lot of wood to keep it going, and after a while he had gathered all that was near at hand, and must needs go farther from the protecting flames in order to keep up the supply.

This, of course, brought him nearer to the waiting wolves, and they were quick to snap at him menacingly, so that he had to make sudden dashes out and in again to the circle of safety.

Presently he bethought himself of a better plan.

"I'll be a magician and carry a wand that will be my protection," he said to himself, smiling at the childish notion, which, nevertheless, he put into execution, for, seizing a blazing brand from

the heart of the fire, he swung it before him shouting.

"Avaunt, ye fiends! Begone into the darkness!" (quoting from a book of legends he had read in his school-days) and charged dauntlessly at his determined besiegers.

The seemingly desperate expedient succeeded beyond his expectations. The frightened wolves fled howling before him, and he had time to secure more than one big armful of wood ere they recovered from their panic sufficiently to resume the siege.

Seth laughed at the brutes being so easily fooled, and congratulated himself on having solved the problem which at first promised to be so difficult.

What between the heat of the fire and the warmth due to his exertions, he had lost all thought of the cold, and if only Reuben or any other of the Rangers had been there to keep him company he would not have minded the situation at all, save that he never forgot the possibility of Indians suddenly announcing their presence by a well-aimed bullet or the whiz of a tomahawk.

But the hours went by, and the wolves were still kept at bay, and no wolves in human guise appeared, and at last the darkness gave way to dawn.

The new day found Seth sorely tired, and

suffering from hunger and loss of sleep, but far from despondent. He knew pretty well in what direction to steer in order to reach the rendezvous, and he at once set off, for the wolves had slunk away with the night, and he had nothing more to fear from them.

He pushed forward as rapidly as the nature of the ground permitted, keeping a keen lookout in every direction for either friends or enemies, and hoping as strongly to meet the first as to avoid the second.

The morning had well advanced, however, before anything that resembled a fellow-being crossed his vision, and then he was somewhat startled by catching a glimpse of a human form several hundred yards distant.

"Can that be an Indian or a Canadian?" he asked himself, "and I wonder if he's alone."

He could not answer his own question, but he could take to cover, and this he did instantly, muttering,

"That fellow may think I've not seen him, and come right on, and if he does I'll finish him."

With his nerves strung to the highest tension, Seth crouched behind the trunk of a big tree and strove to follow the movements of the other man without exposing himself to the risk of a bullet from his gun.

Not the snapping of a dry branch nor the

rustling of dead leaves betrayed his approach, and Seth at last, unable to stand the strain any longer, with infinite caution peered around the protecting tree.

This action nearly cost him his life, for the instant his head appeared the report of a gun rang out and a bullet, striking with a wicked thud, buried itself in the trunk not more than an inch from his head. It was a close shave with a vengeance, but it did not daunt Seth.

"A miss is as good as a mile," he soliloquized philosophically, and feeling safe now until his antagonist should have time to re-load, he sought his chance to return the compliment.

It came a minute later as the other raised his head full for a peep, and Seth's finger was pressing the trigger when with an exclamation of astonishment, he lowered his gun, crying,

"Good land! that's not a Canadian, but one of our own men!"

Sure enough, it was a Ranger who had thus been stalking Seth, supposing him to be an enemy, and who had come within an ace of losing his own life in the endeavor to take Seth's.

Relieved beyond expression, Seth sprang to his feet and shouted,

"Oh ho, Ranger! Whom are you firing at?"

At this the other came out from his cover, and with beaming face hurried over to him. It was Andrew Wilcox, who had lost his way in

the forest, and was doing his best to find it again when he sighted Seth, and, mistaking him for one of the enemy, determined to get the first shot whatever might be the consequences.

Highly delighted at the fortunate meeting, the two set forth with renewed energy, and by the middle of the afternoon reached the rendezvous, where they found the rest of the company already assembled, and Major Rogers in a humor to rate them for their being last, but on hearing Seth's explanation he considered it sufficient, and said in a kindly tone,

"Not your fault this time, Ensign, and now let us see how we're to get across this lake."

Having neither bateaux nor canoes the only thing to be done was to build a raft, and to this they now gave themselves, toiling away like beavers, and making use so far as possible of the dry driftwood that abounded until they had completed an ugly and clumsy but substantial structure.

Then under cover of darkness they set out for the western shore, propelling their slow craft by means of such rude paddles as they could fashion with their hatchets.

It was a clear, still night, and after the toilsome tramping through the forest the easy gliding across the placid bosom of the lake was very delightful.

"I quite like this," said Seth, who, being by

virtue of his rank relieved from the labor of paddling, had stretched himself out on a pile of spruce boughs in great comfort. "I don't mind if it takes us all night to cross."

"But I do," spoke up Reuben, who was one of the paddlers. "It's no easy job keeping the old thing moving, I can tell you. Just come and try it yourself."

"No, thank you," responded Seth smilingly. "I'm enjoying myself too much here—but, hullo! what's that light over there? Do you see it?"

All eyes were at once turned in the direction indicated, where now appeared plainly enough the blaze of camp fires burning brightly, against which the dark forms of a number of men could be descried.

The sight was by no means a welcome one, and there was no mistaking the tone of concern in Major Rogers' voice as he said:

"Confound them! They're encamped at the old Indian carrying place in great force, and we can't get past them without being seen. I don't know just what is best to be done. Stop paddling until I think it over."

The paddlers were glad enough to take it easy for a while, and while the raft floated motionless on the water the Major wrestled with the problem upon the solution of which the safety of the party depended.

The vital question was whether the enemy had

reached the place of their encampment by water or overland, for if they had come by water they would be well provided with batteaux and canoes, but if they had come overland they would have nothing of the kind, and those on the raft were quite safe so long as they kept out of range of their muskets.

But how was this to be known? Calling some of the older men around him the Major consulted with them, but they had no practical suggestion to offer. They were in the main disposed to go ahead and take chances.

To this, however, their sagacious leader would not consent. Brave as he was, and ready enough for fighting when the conditions were at all equal, he had no thought of risking the lives of himself and his men by attempting anything so hazardous as to get past the French on the slow moving, clumsy raft. Some expedient offering more hope of a safe issue must be devised.

CHAPTER XIII

SCOUTING IN WHALEBOATS

It is often the unexpected that happens, and so it proved in this case, for while the Major and his veterans were puzzled as to what to do, the problem solved itself in an altogether different way from anything that had been in their thoughts.

Out of the bosom of the night with scarce any warning now came a sudden breeze of surprising strength which took hold of the raft, and despite the utmost efforts of the sinewy paddlers blew it directly toward the hostile camp!

Major Rogers stormed and swore, and even seized a paddle himself, and plied it with frantic energy, but all to no purpose. The stubborn raft moved steadily if slowly before the wind toward the fires, whose blaze would ere long reveal its presence.

The excitement on board may be readily conceived. The men realized that they were being borne into the jaws of death, and prepared to die like heroes fighting to the last.

Nearer and nearer to the camp moved the

raft. Seth and Reuben standing together at one side grasped each other's hands in silent understanding. It was no time for words, but for action, quick and decisive.

"Now, Rangers," said the Major in a low, grave tone that showed how deep was his feeling: "We're in a bad box, and there's small chance of our getting out of it. But if we can't save ourselves we can make a good fight of it, and sell our lives dearly. Don't be in a hurry to fire. Don't waste a bullet. Club your muskets after they're empty, and keep at it so long as you can stand."

"Ay, ay, sir!" was the subdued yet resolute response of the men as they grasped the guns tightly, and gazed at the nearing shore.

A moment later the wind dropped as suddenly as it had risen, and a brief period of calm followed, after which the wind rose again, but now it blew from a different quarter; and the raft, instead of continuing on the same course, began to move northward.

Major Rogers instantly saw his opportunity. Calling upon his men to paddle with all their might, he directed their efforts so that the raft veered toward the land at a point some distance above the camp, where the trees came close to the water's edge.

"If we can only get there without being seen we'll give them the slip after all," he said to

Seth, and there was an accent of hope in his tone.

Yard by yard the clumsy craft glided in the desired direction, and the men's spirits revived as the shore drew nearer without any sign that the enemy suspected their proximity.

At last the raft grounded, and one by one its passengers, moving as silently as shadows, made their way to land and disappeared in the dense obscurity of the woods with lightened hearts; for although they were not yet out of danger, they had certainly bettered their chances of seeing Fort William Henry again.

Following their leader in Indian file they glided noiselessly through the forest, not knowing at what moment they might be discovered by some outlying sentinel or vigilant scout.

But again fortune favored them, and, without being challenged or opposed, they left the encampment a safe distance behind ere the Major would call a halt that they might rest for the remainder of the night.

Two days later they reached the fort wellnigh spent with hunger and fatigue, and quite content to take it easy for a while ere setting forth on another expedition.

In the following June Major Rogers' heart was made glad by General Shirley sending him six light whale-boats from Albany, accompanied by instructions to proceed immediately to Lake

Champlain and do what he might in the way of intercepting the parties coming down from Canada by water with supplies for Crown Point.

Seth was delighted when he heard the news. The idea of speeding over the lake in the swift, strong boats instead of the frail canoes or clumsy bateaux, appealed to his spirit of romance.

"That will be fine, won't it, Reuben?" he exclaimed enthusiastically after telling his friend. "A lot of us can get into one boat, and make it go faster than any canoe, and then we can take with us plenty of provisions so that we won't need to starve nearly to death as we have done before."

Major Rogers called his officers together to talk over the best ways and means of utilizing the new equipment, and as the result of a lengthy conference an original and daring plan of campaign was settled upon, for the conception of which the Major himself was entitled to the chief credit, and which he proceeded to carry out with his characteristic promptitude.

Putting fifty of his men into five of the boats, he rowed up Lake George to an island, on which the night was spent. The next day he went on about five miles farther, and landed on the east shore of the lake, where it rose rather steeply from the water's edge.

"So far it's been easy enough," he said to his men when they had drawn the boats well up on

the land, "but we've got hard work ahead now, and it will try both our strength and patience to the utmost, but I know I can depend upon you to go through with it."

He might well speak thus, for what they had before them was nothing less than the transporting of the heavy boats over the high land which separated the main body of Lake George from a long narrow projection lying parallel to Lake George, a few miles to the east.

But they were not the men to be dismayed by even so difficult and laborious a task. With their wonted spirit and energy they addressed themselves to it, and ere long all five boats were being dragged up the hillside over a hastily prepared portage path by which no canoe had ever gone.

It was really tremendous work, and under the warm June sun the Rangers stormed and sweated over the many difficulties of the undertaking. Officers and men toiled alike, no one exerting himself more unsparingly than Major Rogers, and bit by bit the way to the summit of the ridge, and thence down again on the other side was won, until at last after two whole days of strenuous labor the whale-boats floated gracefully in the waters of South Bay, and Seth spoke for his comrades no less than for himself when he exclaimed exultantly:

"There, you are now in your proper place, and

may it be many a day before you come out of it again to go climbing mountains!"

In the general laugh that greeted these words the Major, who overhead them, joined heartily, adding:

"I'm quite of your mind, Seth."

After a good night's rest the Rangers embarked, and rowed northward to within six miles of Fort Ticonderoga, where they landed, and having carefully concealed their boats, lay in hiding themselves until evening.

As soon as night fell they were afloat again, and steering toward the fort, which they approached so close under the cover of darkness that they could hear distinctly the sentries exchanging the watch-words.

"Wouldn't they be surprised if we were to give them a volley, just to let them know we're here?" whispered Seth to the man next to him in the boat, as his hand patted the barrel of his gun significantly.

"Yes, no doubt, and wouldn't we be surprised to have a few hundred Indians come after us in their canoes," was the shrewd response. "Just try and count those camp fires. Why there must be a couple of thousand men there at least."

It was certainly a big encampment that spread about the unfinished fort, and Major Rogers had no idea of stirring up such a hornet's nest even

though his whale-boats could probably outstrip the fleetest canoes. Accordingly, after pausing long enough to gain some idea of the strength of the enemy, he pushed on several miles farther, and then ere the break of day, went once more into hiding in the woods, where he remained until the return of night with its favoring darkness enabled him to resume his venturesome progress.

Twelve miles of steady rowing brought the party within gunshot of Crown Point, and here Major Rogers called a halt, for the sky was so clear and the stars were so bright that he deemed it imprudent to attempt to pass the French stronghold.

At this many of the Rangers demurred. They were quite sure the boats with muffled oars could slip by unperceived, and they were very anxious to try, but their shrewd, sagacious leader would not be persuaded. He knew better than to risk the destruction or capture of his entire party for the sake of a daring dash, and the order to land and again take to hiding was given.

"Bless my heart, but this is getting tiresome!" murmured Reuben with a deep sigh after the boats had been snugly stowed away under the trees. "When are we going to do something else, Seth?"

"I'm sure *I* can't tell you," Seth replied diplomatically, for he quite realized what the dignity

of his position as officer required. "Suppose you ask Major Rogers."

But Reuben knew better than to approach the great man with any such question, and was fain to be content with hoping that they would soon have something more exciting to occupy them.

As they lay hidden the next day they saw nearly a hundred boats laden with materials and supplies for Ticonderoga go by them, whereat the Major remarked with significant emphasis:

"If General Shirley could only see this with his own eyes he wouldn't lose any time in bringing an army up here that would make short work of Ticonderoga and Crown Point too; but the longer it's delayed, the harder the job will be."

About noon half a dozen boats, carrying soldiers, seemed to be making directly for the point on which the Rangers were concealed, and there was every evidence of Reuben's desire for excitement being gratified in an unlooked-for way.

The Rangers grasped their muskets, and made ready to receive the Frenchmen with a volley that would come like a bolt out of the blue, and be sure to produce at least a temporary panic among them; but a whispered order from their leader bade them hold their fire until the last moment.

So close came the boat that the talk of those on board could be distinctly heard as they dis-

puted with regard to where they should land, some wanting to go right in, and others to proceed farther.

With throbbing pulses and bated breaths the Rangers, lying motionless in the thicket, awaited the result of the discussion; and, brave men as they were, it was an unspeakable relief to all of them when the officer, who wished to go farther on, carried his point, and the boats were rowed a couple of hundred yards southward, where their occupants landed and had their dinner in full view of their hidden enemy, whose proximity was happily unknown to them. Having dined and rested they proceeded on their way, and the Rangers breathed freely again.

That night the conditions were favorable for slipping past Crown Point, and the boats succeeded in doing so unseen, continuing northward along the lake until the fort had been left many miles behind.

They were now in the very heart of the enemy's territory, and Major Rogers deemed it wise for them all to go no farther, but ordered Seth to take one of the boats, and having manned it with the best oarsmen, to reconnoitre ahead.

Well pleased at this commission, Seth chose his crew and set forth in high hopes of an adventure. It was drawing near to daybreak and not a breath of wind stirred the glassy surface

of the lake. In perfect silence the men plied their muffled oars, and the boat glided swiftly forward, while Seth in the bow swept the scene before him with keen glance, which nothing escaped.

Presently he started and gave an exclamation of joy.

"Look over there!" he said to the man sitting next him. "Isn't that a vessel in the cove? To be sure it is. Now, then, there's our chance. Pull away with all your might, Rangers!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE FIGHT IN THE FOREST

THE vessel which Seth had sighted was a small schooner lying at anchor in a cove, and at first showing no sign of life. But, as the whale-boat shot toward her, a little dog on the deck set up a lively barking, which aroused the crew, and they crawled out of the cabin in a half-awake condition.

At first they did not realize their danger, mistaking the occupants of the boat for friends. Ere the latter could get near enough to board, however, their eyes were opened, and, snatching up whatever weapons were at hand, they prepared to defend themselves.

"Surrender or we'll fire!" Seth shouted, and then paused long enough to allow his words to be understood.

But the Frenchmen laughed scornfully at him, and shook their heads in refusal.

"Take good aim then, Rangers, and fire," was the command, and from the whale-boat flashed a volley whose effect on the schooner was deadly.

One-half the crew of the schooner fell either killed or seriously wounded, and, quick to take

advantage of the confusion created, Seth dashed alongside; and, followed by his men, sprang over the bulwarks of the vessel.

He was not, however, to have everything his own way at once. Bewildered and appalled as the Frenchmen were, they rallied surprisingly when their assailants reached the deck, and fought desperately in self-defence.

Fortunately for the Rangers it was a hand-to-hand conflict in which fire-arms could not be used, and the sturdy provincials were more at home in such rough-and-tumble fighting as the contracted space permitted than were their opponents.

Seth instinctively sought out the captain that he might make him his prisoner, and threw himself upon him with such impetuosity as to hurl him backward to the deck.

But the man was agile and muscular, and had no idea of yielding without a struggle. He wound his arms about Seth, and put forth so tremendous an effort to reverse their position that Seth suddenly realized he had a mighty antagonist to deal with.

Now had he reason to be glad of his skill in wrestling gained at the cost of many a hard fall. Summoning all his strength, and resorting to his most artful devices, he was able to offset the other's greater muscular power as they struggled breathlessly for the mastery.

Being thus evenly matched, it looked like a question of endurance with the chances in favor of the older man; but before it could be thus fought out, the other members of the crew had either submitted, or leaped overboard; and their captain becoming aware of this, thought it best to surrender at discretion. And Seth to his great delight found himself in possession of the schooner and of several prisoners.

Having secured the latter, the Rangers, not one of whom had suffered a serious hurt, proceeded to examine their prize. She proved to be laden with flour, wine, and brandy, intended of course for the comfort of the force at Crown Point; and Seth decided that nothing should be done with this valuable cargo until Major Rogers had given directions concerning its disposition.

He accordingly returned with his good news, and had a warm reception from his chief, who was highly gratified at the capture, and made haste to see it for himself.

"If we could only take the whole thing down to Fort William Henry," he said regretfully, as he surveyed the tempting stuff, "we could make good use of it there. But that's out of the question. We'll just have to destroy it; and the easiest way to do that is by sinking the schooner where she is."

And so it was done, much to the disappoint-

ment of the Rangers, who would have greatly liked to help themselves freely to the liquid portion of the cargo; but this the Major sternly forbade, for it was no time to engage in a carouse with danger on every side.

Hardly had they finished with the schooner when they sighted two lighters coming up the lake, and Major Rogers at once set off in hot pursuit.

These cumbrous craft were easily overtaken; and ranging alongside the Major called to their crews:

"If you surrender at once I'll give you quarter; but if you resist or try to escape, I'll fire on you."

Under the circumstance the only wise action was to surrender; but whether they lost their heads through panic, or really hoped to escape capture, the men on board the lighters foolishly paid no heed to the demand, and strove desperately to get to the shore.

Thereupon the Major ordered his men to fire, and the effect of their volley was fearful, many of the Frenchmen being either killed or wounded, while the rest, thoroughly terrified, made no further effort to escape, but begged for mercy.

On examining the lighters they also proved to be laden with wine and flour, which was perforce ruthlessly destroyed and then came the

question of disposing of the numerous prisoners taken. To bring them all back with them was not practicable, and accordingly Major Rogers selected six, and released the rest on parole.

Then, feeling well satisfied with the results of the expedition, he made his way back to Fort William Henry, where the whole party arrived without a mishap.

Throughout the remainder of the year the Rangers were in almost constant activity, parties of varying strength going out from time to time to spy upon the doings of the enemy at Ticonderoga and Crown Point, where the fortifications were being steadily strengthened and extended, and to take prisoners from whom information might be extracted as to the plans of the French authorities.

In all these proceedings Seth had his share, although he was not a member of every party, and he thoroughly enjoyed the adventurous life, particularly when the whale-boats were used, as he preferred them even to the canoes.

In spite of the innumerable risks run, and of the countless hardships endured, he was still unscathed and always ready for any service that might present itself to his active mind, or be required of him by his commander.

Toward the middle of January of the following year (1757) Major Rogers received orders to assemble his whole force which had been divided

between Fort Edward and Fort William Henry at the latter place, in order to undertake a scouting expedition on a more extensive scale than had hitherto been attempted.

Counting both officers and men the muster showed seventy-five, and the first business was to prepare a proper supply of provisions, and also to secure snow-shoes for each member of the party, as the snow lay deep throughout the district.

This took several days, so that it was the seventeenth of the month before they got under way. They took their course along the lake until they were within a few miles of Ticonderoga, when they made a wide detour inland on the western side to avoid the fort, turning eastward again when it was judged safe, and once more reaching the lake at a point about midway between Ticonderoga and Crown Point at the end of the third day. Here they encamped to await developments.

These came promptly enough in the form of a number of sleds going from Ticonderoga to Crown Point, to which the Rangers at once gave chase.

So soon as they appeared the drivers of the sleds whipped up their horses, and made frantic efforts to escape; but so fleet-footed were their pursuers that only one-half of them succeeded, the result of the chase being the

capture of seven men with three sleds and six horses.

On the prisoners being questioned very important information was elicited from them, for they stated that large numbers of Canadians and Indians were being sent to Ticonderoga from Crown Point, that there were six hundred regular troops at the latter fort, and three hundred and fifty at the former, that as soon as spring came a great many troops were to arrive for the purpose of besieging the English forts, and that the French forts were abundantly stocked with supplies and munitions of war.

Taking it for granted that those which had escaped him would give warning at Ticonderoga, and that a strong force would be sent out from there in pursuit of him, Major Rogers now hastened back to the place where he had encamped the previous night, and, having made every preparation for a fight, set out on the homeward march.

The January thaw had come, and the rain was pouring down upon the snow, making it so soft and sticky that rapid progress was not possible.

Much concerned by what he had learned from the prisoners, the Major led his company, which followed in single file.

"We shall be very lucky if we get off without being attacked this time," he said to Seth, who walked beside him. "The sleds have got to the

fort before this, and the Frenchmen with their Indians are out after us already, I reckon. Well, if they find us we'll fight them so long as we can stand, won't we?"

"That we will," responded Seth emphatically. "And beat them too, unless they're four to our one."

Their course had been over broken ground, and they were now crossing a valley about fifteen rods in breadth, the van having reached the summit of the slope on the west side, when suddenly spurts of flame sprang out from the woods to right and left, and a hail of bullets fell upon the Rangers that made many a gap in their thin line.

Lieutenant Kennedy and Mr. Gardner, a volunteer, fell dead, and others were wounded, including Major Rogers himself, who was struck in the head, the injury happily being but slight.

Seth, with his usual luck, was left untouched, and made haste to return the fire, as did his comrades.

Major Rogers at once ordered his men to concentrate at the top of the hill, and although closely pressed by the enemy, and losing several more of their number, including Captain Spikeman, they succeeded in effecting the manœuvre, and in securing an advantageous position for defending themselves, from which they maintained

a brisk fire upon their assailants that prevented them from closing in upon them.

After the firing had been kept up on both sides for some time, the French attempted a flank movement on the right; but the watchful Major perceived it in time, and directed Lieutenant Stark to meet it with a counter-move, which was cleverly carried out, and the enemy checked with considerable loss.

Meanwhile Seth with a score of his men was bravely defending the centre, and, thanks to the shelter afforded by the big trees, he was able to stand off the attacks of the enemy although they outnumbered him three to one.

Again and again the bullets grazed him, one piercing his cap, and another penetrating his coat sleeve, but he seemed to bear a charmed life, for none of the leaden messengers of death drew blood.

Desperate as the situation of the Rangers seemed, not a man of them lost heart. Their dauntless leader issued his orders to them as calmly as if they were merely on parade, and they obeyed them promptly and precisely.

Seth was in perfect command of himself. Loading and firing his gun with deliberate care he wasted few of his shots, and the accuracy of his aim contributed in no small degree to checking the onset of his opponents.

Yet gallant and stubborn as their defence was,

it seemed as if there could be only one end to the struggle, for the Rangers were clearly outnumbered from the start, and had lost so many in killed, wounded, and taken prisoner that scarce two-thirds of them were left to continue the fight.

Evidently realizing this, their antagonists sought to induce them to submit by ingenious wiles, now cajoling them by saying that it was a pity so many brave men should have to be killed, promising that upon surrender they should be treated with the greatest kindness, and again threatening them with the most dreadful tortures at the hands of the Indians, and asserting that they expected every moment such reinforcements as would enable them to overwhelm the Rangers at one charge.

They even called upon Major Rogers by name to show his wisdom by giving up, assuring him of their high respect for him, and of their intention to deal kindly with him.

But the sagacious veteran was not to be misled by such shallow artifices, and he stoutly replied that he had no thought of surrender, nor would his Rangers yield so long as there were two of them left to stand together.

CHAPTER XV

FORT WILLIAM HENRY IN DANGER.

It was about two o'clock when the first volley fell upon the startled Rangers, and through the long afternoon they had fought doggedly, repelling the successive assaults of their antagonists on flank and centre, and taking toll of them for every gap in their own ranks at the rate of two to one.

The Indian allies of the French had at the first been very active, gliding hither and thither as silently as snakes, or whooping fiercely as they darted from tree to tree in their endeavors to close in on the stubborn provincials. But when the deadly aim of the latter had cost them a score of their number they lost heart, and in spite of the urging of the French sulked at a safe distance.

After Major Rogers was wounded Seth had kept at his side, for he felt a kind of presentiment of further harm to his leader, which a little before sunset was fulfilled by a stray bullet wounding the Major in his hand and wrist so badly that he could no longer use his gun.

"You had better lie down, sir, where they cannot see you," Seth begged of him, "and I will fire your gun as well as my own."

It was hard for the Major to follow this sound advice, but his wounds compelled him, and for the rest of the day Seth did double duty not only as far as firing went, but in carrying his commander's orders to the other officers who were farther away.

As darkness drew near, the French redoubled their endeavors to rush the position held by the Rangers; and more than once it seemed as if they might succeed, but by the most heroic bravery and the wonderfully effective use of their guns the Rangers kept them off until at last the shadows of night enveloped the battlefield and compelled a cessation of the struggle.

Gathering his officers about him the wounded leader announced his purpose.

"We're in a pretty bad fix, I reckon," he said in a tone whose gravity showed how critical he considered the situation. "The rascals have trapped us like rats, but we're not the men to die like rats, even if we've lost a good part of our number and our ammunition is nearly used up. Ticonderoga is so close that there'll be sure to be reinforcements brought against us in the morning and we must get out of this to-night by hook or by crook. After an hour's rest we'll make a start, and if we've to fight every foot of

the way we'll do it, for we're not going to surrender, are we, Rangers?"

"No, no, we'll die first," was the unanimous response heartily given and then the officers returned to their men to give them directions.

About seven o'clock the Rangers began their difficult, dangerous retreat. The rain had ceased to fall, but the snow was water-soaked and the trees dripped from every branch. Even if the men had been in good condition they could not have moved rapidly; but wearied as they were, and some of them having to be carried on extemporized litters, rudely made of boughs, their progress necessarily could be little better than a crawl, and yet at any moment out of the surrounding darkness a horde of merciless savages might burst upon them ravening for their blood.

Despite his wounds Major Rogers took the lead; and as he strode forward with head erect and firm, set figure Seth followed in a spirit of unstinted admiration, ready to lay down his own life in defence of his heroic leader.

Halting frequently for the rest that was imperative they tramped on through the dreary winter night, their hope of escape strengthening as they got farther and farther away without being attacked.

At one of their halts Seth asked the Major:

"If they leave us alone to-night, sir, do you

think they're likely to follow us to-morrow? We'll be a good way from Ticonderoga by daybreak and maybe they'll not care to go very far in case we should get reinforced."

"If we can keep clear of the villains to-night we'll have no more trouble with them this time," responded the Major with a grim smile. "They'll not care to follow us any farther than they can help, I'm sure of that."

And as it turned out he was right in his surmise. Left unmolested all night, the Rangers neither saw nor heard anything of the enemy on the following day, and kept steadily on their way back to Fort William Henry, which they ultimately reached at cost of great exertion, but happily without having to leave behind any of their wounded.

Out of the seventy-five which had gone forth one week before, less than fifty returned uninjured, and six more wounded, the remainder having been either killed or taken prisoners.

It was the first severe loss the Rangers had sustained since their organization, and they felt it deeply, but it did not chill the enthusiasm of the survivors. On the contrary, it only inspired them to greater zeal, and so soon as their leader had recovered from his wounds, they would be ready for fresh service against the enemy, to whom they now owed a greater grudge than ever.

It chanced, however, that Major Rogers' wounds resulted in a serious illness, upon the head of which followed an attack of smallpox, and this led to a change in Seth's circumstances, as with a number of the Rangers he was assigned to strengthen the garrison at Fort William Henry. He did not like this, for the monotony of garrison life was irksome to one of his restless nature; but he had no option in the matter, and accepted the situation as cheerfully as possible.

If he had known what was in the mind of Vandreuil, the Governor of Canada, he would have been more content at the change, as the French commander-in-chief, having been apprised of the preparations the English were making all too deliberately for the assault and destruction of Ticonderoga and Crown Point, resolved to anticipate their action by striking an unexpected blow, and accordingly set about getting ready at Montreal a strong force for the attack of Fort William Henry.

The work was well done, no pains or expense being spared in the equipment of the expedition, which comprised regular soldiers, Canadians, and Indians. They were provided with overcoats for the day and blankets and bearskins for the night, with ample supplies of spare moccasins and mittens, with kettles, axes, flints and steels, and many miscellaneous articles, together with twelve days' provision, the whole being

packed on light Indian sledges, which were easily dragged along. No less than a million francs, equal in value to as many dollars of the present time, were spent upon their force, which reached Lake Champlain before the end of February.

At Ticonderoga they rested for a week, and made ready more than three hundred short scaling ladders, so constructed that two or more could be joined into one long one. Then marching for three days on the ice of Lake George they neared Fort William Henry on the evening of the 18th of March, and prepared for a general assault at break of day. They were sixteen hundred in all, and being pretty well informed of the strength of the English garrison, and knowing that they had no suspicion of their proximity, they felt perfectly confident of carrying all before them.

Now at this time the garrison of Fort William Henry, including the Rangers, consisted of only three hundred and fifty-six effective men. Moreover, the fort was not very strongly built; and even if nearly a score of cannons of different calibre, besides several swivels and mortars, were mounted upon the log ramparts, it was at best ill prepared to withstand a well-organized attack, so that the French had good ground for being quite sanguine of the result of their enterprise.

On the night of the 18th Seth had charge of the sentries, and although he might have taken it easy on one of the bastions, he preferred to pace up and down the ramparts, exchanging an occasional word with the men on guard.

An hour after midnight, as he was standing beside one of the bastions which faced the lake, and speculating as to how long he might have to stay at the fort, and whether Major Rogers would soon recover from his sickness, the sound of distant chopping came to his ears, and presently he perceived the faint glare of far-off fires.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed. "That can mean only one thing. The French have come down the lake to attack our fort, and have made those fires to keep themselves warm. They must think we all go to bed here at night, and leave the fort to take care of itself, but they're greatly mistaken. I must rouse the whole garrison at once."

This he proceeded to do as quietly as possible; and on the commander being informed, he forthwith gave orders for all the cannon that commanded the lake to be double-shotted, and the gunners to stand in readiness to fire them at short notice.

Then Seth asked permission to try a little scouting on his own account.

"I'd like to find out how many there are of them if I can manage it. May I see if I can get

near enough to make a good guess? If they catch me you'll only be one man short."

The commander smiled admiringly at his ardor and indifference to danger.

"It certainly would be a good thing to know their strength," he said; "and if you're willing to run the risk, I wish you God-speed."

"All right, sir, then I'll go," responded Seth; and putting off everything that would encumber him, he vanished into the darkness on his perilous mission.

It was an intensely still, starless night; and if Seth had not known every foot of the ground by heart he might have come many a cropper as he hurried in the direction of the fires, pausing at intervals to listen for any sound betokening the enemy's approach, and then going resolutely on again until he had got within a few hundred yards of the encampment.

Here he came to a full stop in order carefully to consider the situation.

"If I go any farther in this direction I may be caught by some of their outposts; yet I'm not near enough to find out what I've come for," he soliloquized. "I think perhaps I'd better try around to the right."

Accordingly he made a detour which brought him to the side of the French position, and there the cover of the trees made it possible for him to draw so close to the camp fires that he could

plainly see the figures of the men about there and even overheard their talk.

"Bless my heart, but they're as thick as flies," he exclaimed under his breath, with a feeling of consternation at his heart. "They outnumber us completely. I'm afraid they'll take the fort."

As he watched them moving to and fro in the light of the fires he became aware that they were getting ready for a concerted movement, and presently they formed up in regular array upon the ice which happened at the time to be clear of snow.

"They're going to march on the fort right away," said Seth to himself. "I must get back and give warning."

The French had taken the precaution to send out many scouts in advance, and these were now spread over the space intervening between their camp and Fort William Henry, and Seth therefore had to run the gauntlet of them ere he could regain the fort. Consequently every step was full of danger; and he moved with the utmost caution yet as swiftly as possible, for the moments were precious in the extreme.

Once and again he passed so close to one of the scouts that he could almost have touched him; but his intimate knowledge of the ground stood him in good stead, especially since the others were warily feeling their way, and he

escaped discovery as it were by the skin of his teeth.

He had left the encampment far behind, and was about congratulating himself upon having successfully passed all danger when he was challenged by a scout, who suddenly rose right in his path.

His only weapon was the hunting-knife which hung in his belt; and he did not attempt to use that, but replied to the challenge by hurling himself at the scout head down, butting the astonished Canadian full in the stomach, and tumbling him upon his back while his gun flew out of his hands, and fell beyond his reach.

So completely was the wind knocked out of him that he could not even swear at his assailant, who had disposed of him in such unlooked-for fashion; and Seth, not waiting to do him any more harm, dashed on to the fort, where the commander was anxiously awaiting his return.

"They're more than a thousand strong," he panted, "and they're coming up on the ice right away. They'll be here soon."

"Well, we're ready for them," replied the commander resolutely; "and though they are four times as strong as we are, they'll find they have no easy task to get the best of us."

Half an hour after Seth's return the sound of many men marching rapidly over the smooth

ice reached the ears of those at the fort, and the commander gave orders for the gunners to be ready to fire the cannon the instant he gave the word.

He rightly judged that the best way of showing the enemy that their hope of surprising the fort was not to be realized was by receiving them with the heaviest broadside he could manage to bestow upon them, and so he waited for them to approach near enough to render his method of greeting most effective.

The tense expectancy of the little garrison may be imagined, as listening in breathless silence they heard the steady approach of their assailants; and their commander seemed to wait so long before giving the order to the gunners that they grew impatient and restless.

But at last clear and firm the command:

"Make ready. Fire!"

rang out upon the stillness of the night, and was instantly followed by a sudden burst of flame and a tremendous explosion that sent the startled echoes flying far over the bosom of the frozen lake, to reverberate from the snow-clad hills on the opposite shore.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FOILING OF THE FRENCH

WITHOUT waiting to ascertain the effect of the first broadside of grape and round-shot, Major Eyre, the commander of the fort, gave orders to reload the cannon for a second discharge.

But this was not required. From the cries and shouts that were heard in the direction of the enemy it was evident that there had been deadly work done in their ranks, and that they were thrown into confusion and panic.

"I should not wonder if we've stopped them for the present," said Major Eyre cheerily, "and that we'll have no more trouble from them to-night."

In which surmise he proved to be correct, for the French were so smitten with consternation by the utterly unexpected storm of shot and shell that they incontinently turned about and retreated to their encampment pell-mell, to the vast rage and disgust of Rigaud, their commander, who stormed and swore at them in a vain effort to stay their flight.

Highly gratified as they in the fort felt at the

foiling of this attempted surprise, they knew very well that another attack would certainly be made; and Major Eyre, as soon as it was daylight, despatched two of the fleetest-footed rangers on snow shoes to Fort Edward to obtain reinforcements if possible, he being resolved to hold out until the very last moment.

Not long after daybreak the French reappeared in full force, filing off to surround the fort upon which they kept up a brisk fire of musketry, although they had better have spared their ammunition, as the garrison took good care not to expose themselves, and the bullets buried themselves harmlessly in the stout ramparts.

"If it amuses them it does not hurt us," remarked Major Eyre with a satirical smile; "and we need not complain so long as they keep so respectful a distance."

On their part the garrison were by no means idle, Seth and his Rangers in particular seizing every chance for a shot; and the excellence of their guns, combined with the accuracy of their aim, enabled them to make many of their shots tell.

Once when the commander was standing by him he said to Seth:

"Do you see that officer over there on the right, who seems to be urging his men to advance closer?"

"Yes, sir," replied Seth. "I know the one you mean."

"Well, do you think you can pick him off for me? He evidently thinks he is out of range, but perhaps you can show him he's mistaken."

Seth measured the distance carefully with his eye. It was a very long shot, and the officer being in almost constant motion rendered it still more difficult, but he considered it worth trying, and said so to Major Eyre.

"Let me see then what you can do," was the response.

Seth loaded his gun with nicest care, and took aim with much deliberation, waiting until the officer should be still for a moment before he fired.

At last he pulled trigger; and as the report rang out the Frenchman staggered, threw up his arms, and then pitched forward upon the snow.

"Capital! capital!" exclaimed the commander enthusiastically. "I never saw a better shot in my life. Where did you learn to shoot like that, Ensign?"

Seth blushed with pleasure at this praise of his marksmanship, and answered modestly:

"At home on the farm, sir. I've been used to handling a gun ever since I was a little chap."

"Aha, that accounts for it," said Major Eyre. "Such skill is not to be acquired in the army. If all our men could take lessons from

you, they'd be much the better for it. Well, you've given that poor chap his quietus. We'll see no more of him."

The loss of their leader so startled the soldiers that they scuttled off out of range in a way which highly amused those who were watching them from the fort.

"They know how to take care of themselves," was Seth's smiling comment as he reloaded his gun. "But we'll have more trouble from them yet."

They made no further demonstrations during that day, however, but in the course of the night they again attempted to approach on the ice, and were again repelled by a broadside from the cannon which the watchful garrison let fly at them so soon as they were heard advancing.

Being thus once more balked of their intention they sought to vent their rage by burning two sloops that were ice-bound on the lake before the fort, and a large number of bateaux drawn up on the shore.

So soon as he realized their purpose Major Eyre himself sallied out at the head of a party to endeavor to protect the craft, but they were too late. The flames quickly took possession, and could not be controlled, and ere morning both sloops and bateaux were completely consumed.

The next day was the Sabbath, and it seemed

at first as if the French were going to respect the day by remaining quietly in camp; but at noon they filed out of the woods, and marched across the ice, ostentatiously parading their scaling-ladders, and making as imposing a demonstration of their strength as possible.

"They're surely in earnest this time," said Seth as he watched their martial movements, which were so carefully studied to inspire the little garrison with apprehension. "We're not to spend our Sunday in peace after all."

"There's no telling," responded Major Eyre. "They may be only making a feint in the hope of scaring us into surrender."

Coming to a halt while still at a safe distance, the French sent forward a small party whose officer bore a red flag; and rightly judging that this was the signal for a parley, Major Eyre bid Seth take a handful of his Rangers and go out to meet them.

He gladly obeyed the order, and presently returned with the chief of the Canadian artillery, Le Mercier, who on being led blindfold into the fort, announced himself as the bearer of a message from his commander.

He was conducted to the room of Major Eyre, where the other English officers were assembled, and courteously invited to deliver his message.

"I am sent by my commander, General Rigaud," he said in a suave ye tdignified tone, "to

present his most respectful compliments, and to say on his behalf that he invites you to surrender the fort without further fighting, and in event of your doing so, assuring you of his protection; but if you refuse, he will without delay make a general assault, and when the fort is taken, put the whole garrison to death or deliver them to the Indians to be tortured."

Having thus spoken with impressive emphasis, Le Mercier swept the group of officers with a penetrating glance from his dark eyes, and then assumed an attitude of respectful attention as he awaited the English commander's reply.

Major Eyre hesitated only long enough to look into the faces of his subordinates for an instant, and, being satisfied with what he read there, proceeded with his response.

"Convey to your commander my compliments and inform him how deeply I appreciate his kind consideration in thus giving me the opportunity of surrendering without the loss of my garrison; but at the same time assure him of my regret that I cannot accede to his proposition, as I and these with me are fully determined to defend the fort to the very last."

There was no mistaking the decision with which he spoke, and Le Mercier, suppressing a pitying smile at the folly of the English in imagining they could withstand so superior a force as he represented, bowed gracefully and with-

drew, being blindfolded again until he had been conducted outside the fort.

On his return to them the whole French force advanced as if to storm the ramparts, and the little garrison prepared for a desperate defence; but to their mingled amazement and relief the enemy contented themselves with another fusillade that did no more harm than the first and then wheeled about and returned to camp.

"Well, upon my honor, that's the queerest proceeding I've ever seen," exclaimed Major Eyre laughingly. "What can have frightened them this time that they retreat before we've fired a shot at them?"

There was something the matter, although he did not know it; and that was the material out of which the French force was chiefly composed, namely, Canadians and Indians, who were not at all suited for the work at hand. Useful as they undoubtedly were for scouting, and for fighting in the forest with plenty of cover, they had no stomach for such service as was now required; and in reality out of his sixteen hundred men the only ones upon which Rigaud could rely were the comparatively few regular soldiers he had with him, who, however brave and willing they might be, were not by themselves equal to the taking of the fort.

This was the explanation of what seemed like ludicrous vacillation on his part, and for which

he was not so much to blame as his opponents imagined.

Well pleased at the retirement of the French, but still puzzled to guess what they would do next, the English spent the rest of the day in strengthening the defences of the fort, and making every preparation against a night attack.

When night did come the French were heard advancing again, and those in the fort nerved themselves for what they took for granted would be a supreme effort on the part of their foes.

Yet once more were they misled, as the real object of the assault proved not to be the fort itself, but the buildings outside of it, which consisted of several storehouses, a hospital, a sawmill, and the huts of the Rangers, besides a sloop on the stocks, and a number of scows and whaleboats.

Under cover of the night the French crept up carrying fagots of pine, and placing them against the farther side of the buildings, set them on fire, taking care to escape before the flames broke out sufficiently to make them visible to the watching English who, straining their eyes to penetrate the darkness, fired wherever they thought there was a chance of hitting them.

If they were not particularly successful as besiegers, however, they certainly were as incendiaries, for in the course of the night they had every building ablaze, and the burning cinders

fell inside the fort in such showers that it required hard work on the part of the garrison to save the barracks and other buildings from being set on fire.

Happily the elements came to their aid in the very crisis of their danger, for a thick fall of snow began filling the air with large moist flakes which soon covered the roofs, and effectually protected them against the danger of ignition.

This snow-fall continued all that day and all the next night, not stopping until the ground was covered to a depth of quite three feet; and while it lasted the French lay quiet in their camp, so that their opponents were enabled to gain some respite from the strain they had been enduring.

A little before dawn on Tuesday twenty of the regulars, inspired no doubt by the desire to do all the damage to the enemy that they possibly could, made a bold attempt to burn the sloop on the stocks, and the several hundred scows and whaleboats which had thus far escaped.

Their design was not discovered until the sloop was in flames, and then Major Eyre hurriedly despatched Seth with his Rangers to save the other craft if possible.

They dashed off in high spirits, and got near enough to the soldiers to give them a volley which accounted for five of them, whereat the remainder, without even waiting to return the

compliment, retreated hastily to camp, where the Rangers did not venture to follow them.

The burning sloop, amid the expanse of spotless snow, made a splendid spectacle, which gave no pleasure to the defenders of Fort William Henry; but it was the last blow struck by their foes, and when on the following morning the sun rose bright and strong, flooding the wintry scene with radiance, the snow-covered surface of the lake was seen to be dotted with the dark forms of Rigaud's retreating force toiling back to Canada on snow-shoes, a foiled and humiliated band of men.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SIEGE OF FORT WILLIAM HENRY

The failure of Rigaud's expedition against Fort William Henry was followed by a period of peace, during which Seth was occupied for the most part in leading scouting parties northward to spy upon the doings of the French at Ticonderoga and Crown Point.

He had many an adventure in this service, and more than once escaped capture by what was almost a miracle, yet his ardor was not in the least damped by any of these thrilling experiences, and he had no sooner got safely back from one outing than he began to plan for another.

Major Rogers meanwhile had been despatched to Nova Scotia on a special mission, and consequently was far away when the French resolved to wipe out the disgrace of the defeats of Dieskau and Rigaud by sending such a force against the obstinate defenders of the English fort as would render complete victory an absolute certainty.

To this undertaking Montcalm himself gave his personal attention, and got together at Montreal an army of regulars, Canadians, and In-

dians that, so far as numbers went, certainly seemed to assure success.

By the end of July he had all transported to Ticonderoga, where Bourlamaque, with the battalion of Bearn and Royal Rousillon had been since May, finishing the fort and sending out scouting parties to discover the strength and designs of the English at Fort William Henry.

Ticonderoga, which by being made the base of the projected attack upon the English stronghold had become a point of great importance, is a high rocky promontory between Lake Champlain on the north and the mouth of the outlet of Lake George on the south. Near its extremity and close to the fort were encamped the battalions of Bourlamaque.

Two miles farther south a wide space had been cleared which was covered by the tents of the regiments of La Reine, Languedoc, and Guienne, all commanded by Levis.

From this camp a road a mile and a half long had been cut through the forest to the navigable waters, and at the end of this road was another fortified camp formed of colony regulars, Canadians, and Indians, under command of Rigaud.

Beyond this at the edge of Lake George, and at Rogers' Rock, were stationed advance parties whose business it was to watch the movements of the English.

There were thus gathered within a range of

four miles fully eight thousand fighting men, representing the brightest civilization and the darkest barbarism of the day, from the scholarly Montcalm and the accomplished Levis with their suite of courtly young officers, to the foulest man-eating savages of the uttermost northwest.

The Indian allies numbered nearly two thousand. They were exceedingly difficult to manage and cost their employers infinite trouble, besides being a tremendous expense. There was no keeping them fed. Rations would be served to them for a week, and they would consume them in a couple of days and demand more. Once when refused they took the matter into their own hands, and butchered and devoured a drove of cattle intended for the troops.

Their supreme delight was to get drunk; and sometimes when crazed with brandy they fought like wolves, grappling and tearing each other with their teeth.

Some of them were cannibals, and actually dared to indulge in their abominable appetite while in camp, the unfortunate victim being an English prisoner taken by one of their war parties.

Such were the fiends in human form whose aid the French had enlisted, and who subsequently were to cast so dark a stain upon the record of this enterprise.

It was the 1st of August when, having got

everything arranged to his satisfaction, Montcalm set his whole force in motion toward the object of his undertaking. The spectacle presented was a brilliant and imposing one, and well calculated to strike terror into the hearts of those against whom it was prepared.

Seth and a little band of his Rangers, who had ventured out from Fort William Henry on a scouting expedition, beheld it from the summit of a lofty hill, and their spirits sank at the sight.

"Heaven help us! There's no counting them!" exclaimed Seth in a tone of consternation. "We can't possibly hold the fort against them. They've five times as many men as we have, at least."

"Let us hurry back to the fort then and tell Colonel Monro," Reuben Thayer made haste to suggest. "Perhaps he'll think it best not to attempt to defend our fort, but to retreat to Fort Edward."

"We can't tell him too soon what we've seen," returned Seth. "But I'm sure he won't give up the fort without a fight. He's too brave to do that."

In this opinion of Lieutenant-Colonel Monro, who then was in command at Fort William, Seth showed how well he knew the man, for the sturdy Scotch veteran certainly was not of the kind to beat a retreat or to surrender at discretion. On the contrary, he could be relied upon

to fight to the very last; and, if need be, to die rather than give up his sword.

What the Rangers saw was the French flotilla moving up the lake in the full blaze of the afternoon sun.

First a great swarm of birch canoes crowded with naked savages in war paint and feathers, and gliding swiftly over the smooth water in no particular order. Next came two hundred and fifty bateaux, moved by sail and oar, some bearing the Canadian militia and some the battalion of old France in handsome uniform. Then followed the cannon and mortars, each one placed on a platform, sustained by two bateaux lashed side by side, and rowed by the militia of Saint Ours. The battalions of Bearn and Rousillon, the Canadians of Gaspe with the provision boats and the field hospital continued the procession, and lastly a rear-guard of regulars closed the long line.

No wonder that while the watching scouts could not help being filled with admiration at the spectacle, they also were depressed by the conviction that to repel the attack of such a force was hopeless, and that the fate of their beloved fort was sealed.

With utmost speed they made their way back through the woods, and told Commander Monro what they had seen.

As Seth rightly judged, the brave old man,

while fully realizing the seriousness of the situation, did not for a moment contemplate the evacuation of the fort, or the anticipating of the attack by sending a message of surrender to Montcalm.

What he did do was at once to despatch a note to General Webb, who was at Fort Edward, fourteen miles distant, with nearly two thousand men, informing him of the advance of the French and asking for reinforcements, a request which he repeated again and again during the siege, without evoking any response from Webb, who seemed to have been too timid to do as he should have done, namely, hasten forward with his troops to the support of his imperilled brethren in arms.

All told, including sailors and mechanics, Monro had a bare two thousand men wherewith to oppose the eight thousand of the French commander. Yet when Montcalm, having arrived within striking distance of the fort, and completed his preparations for the siege, sent an aide-de-camp to him with the following letter:

"I owe it to humanity to summon you to surrender. At present I can restrain the savages, as I might not have power to do under other circumstances, and an obstinate defence on your part can only retard the capture of the place a few days, and endanger an unfortunate garrison which cannot be relieved. I demand a decisive

answer in an hour;" the doughty Scotchman gave his answer at once, and it was that he and his soldiers would defend themselves to the last, emphasizing his refusal by a broadside from his cannon so soon as the truce was ended.

While the white flags were flying the Indians swarmed over the fields before the fort; and when they learned the result of the parley, an Abenakis chief shouted exultantly in broken French:

"You won't surrender, eh! Fire away then, and fight your best, for if I catch you, you shall get no quarter"—a threat that was only too awfully fulfilled in the sequel.

At this time Fort William Henry was an irregular bastioned square, formed by embankments of gravel, surmounted by a rampart of heavy logs laid in tiers crossed one upon another, the interstices being filled with earth. The lake protected it on the north, the marsh on the east, and ditches with chevaux-de-frise on the south and west. Seventeen cannons, great and small, besides mortars and swivels were mounted upon the ramparts.

Montcalm's first proceeding was to open trenches for the protection of his soldiers—a task of extreme difficulty, as the ground was covered with half burned stumps, roots, and fallen trunks. All night of the 4th of August eight hundred men toiled with pick and spade

and axe, while the cannon from the fort flashed through the darkness, and grape and round shot whistled and screamed over their heads.

Before daybreak the first parallel was completed, and a battery nearly finished on the left, while another was well started on the right. The men now worked under cover, safe in their burrows, one gang relieving another, as the operations went steadily on all day.

So soon as these forts were in readiness, Montcalm mounted his cannon upon them, eight at the left and eleven at the right, and proceeded to bombard Fort William Henry vigorously. The fort replied with spirit, and for several days ensuing the heavy guns thundered from dawn until dark, while from a hundred peaks and crags the astonished wilderness roared back the sound.

The Indians enjoyed this artillery performance greatly. They had been of no use whatever thus far, as instead of devoting themselves to scouting, they loitered about the camp and trenches, or amused themselves by firing at the fort from behind stumps and logs.

Some, in imitation of the French, dug little trenches for themselves in which they wormed their way toward the ramparts, and now and then picked off an artilleryman, although not without loss on their own side.

Seth, whose heart was hot against the redskins, not only because they were of the enemy,

but because of what he had himself suffered at their merciless hands, made a point of watching for them; and not a day passed without his having the satisfaction of putting an end to the career of one or more of them.

By the end of the week the French had pushed their trenches so far forward that a battery was begun not two hundred and fifty yards from the fort, and the Indians lay so thick among the beans, maize, and cabbages that none of the garrison dared show themselves for an instant, as that meant certain death.

The position of the besieged had now become deplorable. More than three hundred of them had been either killed or wounded; the dread disease of smallpox was raging in their midst and the casemates were crowded with the sick. All the large cannon were burst or dismounted, the ramparts were already breached in several places, and a general assault might be looked for at any time, while there was evidently no hope of assistance from Fort Edward where General Webb still stayed inert.

After consultation with his officers Monro determined upon attempting a sortie in force, and among those selected to share in it were the Rangers, the majority of whom had so far escaped both shot and sickness.

"We have about reached the end of our tether," the sturdy old Scotchman said sadly to

the council. "A sortie seems to be the only thing left for us to try. I confess I am not at all sanguine myself of it doing us any good, but there's no telling. It may gain us some respite even though it does not effect our deliverance."

There was no dissenting voice, but on the contrary a hearty support of the veteran's project; and when volunteers for the forlorn hope were invited by him, not one of the officers held back.

Seth felt highly gratified when to the Rangers was assigned the perilous honor of taking the lead.

"There is only one chance in ten of our getting back alive, Reuben," he said to his friend, as, with countenance whose gravity showed how fully they realized what was before them, they talked together after the council of officers had dispersed, "but we can only do our best. If we have to surrender, I pray God we may not fall into the hands of those red devils the French have with them. I'd rather be shot at once than be taken prisoner by them and tortured to death."

"And so would I," answered Reuben. "They're perfect fiends, not human beings, and the French ought to be ashamed of themselves for having such allies."

It was at the dead of night when the majority of the effective men in the garrison silently

moved out of the fort and across the fields in the direction of Montcalm's encampment.

They were favored in their enterprise by the intense darkness of the night, and by the fact that the bombardment had been so heavy all day that the French were persuaded they had practically cannonaded their antagonists into helplessness, and consequently took no special precautions against a night attack.

Led by the Rangers, who seemed to possess the faculty of seeing in the dark, the gallant band made its way resolutely toward the enemy's position, and had got so near that they could hear the sentries exchanging the watchword on their rounds, when the challenge "*Qui va la?*" rang sharply out on the still night air, and they came to a sudden halt.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MASSACRE OF THE ENGLISH

SETH was so close to the sentry who had discovered their approach, that with a single bound forward he was able to cut him down and silence him forever.

But his warning challenge had been heard by others of the guard, and they hurried out to investigate. Realizing that further concealment of their design was not possible, Colonel Frye, who was in command, called upon his men to fire, and they poured a volley into the French encampment that wakened every sleeper, and for the moment created lively confusion.

The well-disciplined soldiers soon regained order, however, and rushed to repel the attack in such numbers that Colonel Frye at once saw the hopelessness of withstanding them, and gave the command to retreat.

Reluctantly enough his men obeyed, for, although they could see for themselves how they were outnumbered, they did want to inflict some loss upon the enemy before retreating to the fort.

They accordingly gave back as slowly as possible, firing and reloading their muskets with

such celerity that the French conceived their numbers to be much greater than they really were, and were more cautious in their pursuit than they would have been if they had known the truth.

Seth was one of the last to retreat, and his slowness nearly cost him his life, as an Iroquois scout, creeping serpent-like through the long grass, got near enough to hurl his tomahawk at him with deadly aim. But by a happy chance Seth at that moment threw up his gun, and the hatchet struck it instead of his head, glancing harmlessly off to one side.

In his rage at having missed, the Iroquois sprang upon Seth, and throwing his arms about him, strove to fasten his teeth in the Ranger's throat as though he were a wolf.

Now did Seth's skill in wrestling serve him in good stead. The redskin's onset was so sudden and unexpected that he had almost succeeded in his brutal purpose ere his intended victim could defend himself; but the next instant by a dexterous movement he evaded the cruel teeth, and then, dropping his gun, gripped his assailant around the neck, and flung him backward with such force that the savage's senses were knocked out of him, and he lay limp and harmless.

"It would serve you right if I put my knife into you," growled Seth, as he groped about for

his gun. But he forebore to do it, and having picked up the gun, hurried after the others, who of course had not waited for him, and with them regained the protection of the fort.

The sortie having accomplished nothing, the situation seemed hopeless; and after again consulting with his subordinates, Colonel Monro with a heavy heart came to the conclusion that there was no alternative but to capitulate on the best terms obtainable.

Accordingly on the 9th of August a white flag was raised, a drum was beat, and Lieutenant-Colonel Young, mounted upon horseback, accompanied by a few soldiers, went to the tent of Montcalm.

As the result of his negotiations with the French commander it was agreed that the English troops should march out with the honors of war, and be escorted to Fort Edward by a detachment of French troops; all French prisoners captured in America since the war began should be given up within three months; and that all the stores, munitions, and artillery were to be the prize of the victors, with the exception of one field-piece which the garrison were to be permitted to retain in recognition of their brave defence.

These terms were fair and honorable to both parties; and if only Montcalm had taken such measures as would have insured their being car-

ried out, the horrible proceedings of the following days, whereby what might otherwise have been considered a creditable achievement was turned into an appalling scandal, might have been prevented.

It is true that before signing the capitulation Montcalm held a council with the Indian chiefs and asked them to consent to the conditions and to promise to restrain their warriors from disorder, and that the chiefs approved of everything and promised everything.

But he should not have been content with this. Knowing the nature of his allies as he did, he ought to have used his regular troops upon whom he could depend as a guard for the English, who were in no position to defend themselves.

When the garrison evacuated Fort William Henry they marched over to join their comrades in the entrenched camp which was included in the surrender; and no sooner had they gone than a horde of yelling savages climbed through the enclosures in search of rum and plunder.

They found very little of either, and at once proceeded to vent their disappointment upon the unfortunate men, who, having been too sick to leave their beds, were awaiting removal later on.

These they butchered without remorse, and even cut off their heads, which they paraded

proudly from the casements. It was a terrible scene, yet no attempt to check the fiends was made by the French, who seemed afraid to interfere with their savage allies.

Having looted the fort of what little there was in it, the Indians then turned their attention to the entrenched camp, where all the English were now collected. The French guard stationed there either could not or would not keep out the bloodthirsty rabble, and they roamed among the tents intrusive and insolent, their painted visages marked with sinister grins as they twitched the long hair of the terrified women in anticipation of the scalping knife.

Seth saw it all, and the witnessing of such indignities so filled him with fury that again and again he could scarce restrain himself from striking down one of the dusky demons. But of course any such act would have been utter folly, as it would certainly have precipitated the general massacre for which the Indians hankered.

At length through the earnest efforts of Montcalm and his officers something like order was obtained and the most of the Indians were persuaded to return to their own encampment for the night.

But there was little rest in the English camp, and as soon as day broke they made haste to set out for Fort Edward. They had their muskets, but they were without ammunition; and no

sooner had they begun to move than the Indians, in spite of the presence of the French escort, began to plunder them of their little baggage, demanding rum, of which there was only a little in the soldiers' canteen.

When after much difficulty the column at last got started along the road, the redskins crowded in upon them, impeding their progress, snatching caps, coats, and weapons from the men, tomahawking those that resisted, and seizing upon women and children, dragged them shrieking away, or murdered them on the spot.

Suddenly arose the awful sound of the war-whoop, and at this signal for butchery the whole mob of savages rushed upon the rear of the columns where the New Hampshire men were, and proceeded to slaughter them wholesale.

A frightful tumult ensued. Montcalm, Levis, Bourlamaque, and other French officers who had hastened to the scene, threw themselves among the Indians, and by promises and threats sought to stop their murderous frenzy.

"Kill me, but spare the English who are under my protection!" exclaimed Montcalm in the dramatic fashion characteristic of his race, and he himself tore a young officer from the grasp of a Huron who was about to tomahawk him.

Yet the dreadful work went on until many hundreds of the unfortunate English had been either killed or carried off by the ruthless sav-

ages, before at last the survivors were got back to the entrenched camp, and there protected from further massacre by an adequate guard of French regulars.

Seth had a marvellous escape, or rather series of escapes. His chivalrous instinct had impelled him to keep near the women and children in the hope of in some manner being helpful to them; but, although he had possessed the strength of Samson, he could not have accomplished anything, for the Indians crowded in upon them from all sides, and it was impossible to ward off their assaults.

Yet he kept his place until at the raising of the war-whoop the general attack was made; and then in the wild confusion that followed he was jostled and hustled this way and that until he found himself separated from the main body and with the way clear to the forest.

"I can do nothing for the others," he muttered. "I may as well try and save myself." And after a quick glance to right and left to make sure there were no Indians near, he started to run for the shelter of the trees.

He had not gone many yards when the cry of a child fell on his ears. He checked himself for an instant, and looking in the direction from which the cry came, saw a little boy half hidden in the grass, who was calling to him:

"Take me with you, oh, take me with you too!"

At first Seth hesitated. Where delay probably meant death, to attempt to save the boy might merely imperil himself without benefiting the boy.

But the hesitation was only for an instant, and then, carried away by a generous impulse, Seth changed his course so as to take hold of the little fellow's hand, and together they fled toward the forest.

Half way thither they were met by an Indian who barred the way with a bloody tomahawk, and yelled at them in a frenzied fashion. He was a giant in size, and at sight of him the boy shrieked and cowered close to Seth, who came to a full stop as though he had no thought of resistance.

Misled by this apparent submission, the Indian, his eyes gleaming with the lust of blood, made a grab at the boy's hair with the intention of scalping him. Seth then saw his opportunity, and with a quick spring threw himself upon the wretch, who, not expecting this sudden onset, went down headlong, while the boy dodged out of his reach unhurt.

Holding him fast despite his violent struggles to get free, Seth tore the tomahawk from his grasp, and despatched him with the weapon already stained with the blood of his victims.

Then exclaiming: "One more devil done for!" he caught the boy by the hand, and resumed the

race for the forest, which they reached, all spent but scathless.

Knowing his way thoroughly, he pushed on as rapidly as the strength of his little companion permitted, keeping a sharp lookout lest there should be any scouts hunting for fugitives.

By the end of an hour the poor boy was so exhausted that Seth had either to let him have a rest, or desert him. He of course chose the first alternative, and they hid in a hollow where no one could have found them save by coming right upon them.

The boy was full of gratitude to his preserver, and as the little chap curled up beside him, seeming to feel quite secure, Seth took some comfort from having been the means of saving his young life.

All that night and the following day they were in the woods with nothing to stay their hunger save the few berries they could find, but ere the return of night they reached Fort Edward, being the first of the fugitives to do so.

Seth's account of the atrocities perpetrated by the enemy filled those at Fort Edward with horror and indignation; and if the men had been left to themselves, they would have rushed to the scene to avenge their brethren.

But the saner councils of their officers prevailed. They were not in sufficient force to cope with the French and their allies, and, how-

ever daring and impetuous their attack might be, it could only result in their own discomfiture. There was nothing to be done but to keep within the fort until the invaders had finished their work of destruction.

During the days that followed cannon were fired at intervals from the fort to guide those who had fled to the woods, whence they came dropping in half dead with hunger; but it was not until more than a week after the surrender that the main body of the garrison appeared under the escort of a strong French guard.

Meanwhile the victors were busy demolishing the English stronghold. First the barracks were torn down, and then the huge pine logs of the ramparts were got together in a heap, upon which were thrown the bodies of the butchered men and women, and the whole was set on fire. "The mighty funereal pyre blazed all night. On the following day the army re-embarked for Canada. The din of ten thousand combatants, the rage, the terror, the agony were gone; and no living thing was left but the wolves that gathered from the mountains to feast upon the dead."

CHAPTER XIX

AN ADVENTURE IN NEW YORK

THE fall of Fort William Henry, and the horrors that followed it, especially as his friend Reuben Thayer was among the victims, threw Seth into a state of deep depression. His life seemed to have lost its spring, and the impulse was strong upon him to obtain his release from the Rangers, and make his way down to Boston in the hope of securing a berth on an ocean-going ship, where he might forget his grief in the novel experience of a sailor's life.

He did yield to it so far as to go to Albany, where Major Rogers was at the time, and to open his heart to him in the matter, although he much feared that he would get only a good rating from him.

But the veteran warrior showed a side of his nature he had never before revealed. Instead of meeting Seth with harshness or ridicule he showed him surprising sympathy.

"I know just how you feel, my boy," he said kindly. "It is hard to be patient and to keep up one's heart when everything seems going

wrong, although some of us may be trying to do our best. If the English generals would only take the advice that is given them, these disasters need never have happened, and not only would Fort William Henry still be ours, but we would have had Ticonderoga and maybe Crown Point too. But it's no use crying over spilt milk, Seth. We must only cheer up and try again. The generals will be wiser next time, and we'll drive the French back to Canada before you're much older."

Touched and brightened by the Major's words which went right to his heart, Seth actually smiled as he responded:

"Of course, that's the right way to look at it, sir. It's no good getting into the dumps and staying there. We'll beat the French yet, and teach those devilish Indians a lesson that they will not soon forget."

"Spoken like a man, Seth!" exclaimed the Major, giving him a hearty clap on the back. "You're got the right stuff in you, and you'll live to see the English masters of the whole continent, take my word for it. And now I've got a bit of good news for you. How would you like to take a trip to New York by way of a little change?"

What was left of the gloom that darkened Seth's countenance vanished in an instant and he answered eagerly:

"How would I like it? Why, I'd be delighted to go. Are you going, sir?"

"No, I'm not going, Seth, but I have an important despatch to send, and I dare say I could arrange for you to carry it if you will promise me to come back, and not go off on one of the ships, of which there are a good many more there than at Boston."

"Oh, I'll promise to come back if you'll only let me go," said Seth earnestly. "But I hope I can stay a little while so as to see the great city."

"That will be all right, my boy," and the Major smiled indulgently. "I will tell you more about it in the morning, and now you may as well have a look around Albany and perhaps you will come across some of your friends."

So in a very lightened frame of mind Seth left his chief, and spent the rest of the day seeing the sights of the growing town, whose most important citizens at that time were the Dutch traders who knew so well how to get the better of the Iroquois and other friendly Indians that brought them furs in barter for goods.

The peaceful bustle of business was a wonderfully pleasant change after the bloody strife through which he had so lately passed, and it served to restore the tone of his spirits so that he lay down that night quite a different man from what he had begun the day.

He saw Major Rogers the next morning, and

learned that he was to start for New York that afternoon. He found so much to interest him in Albany that he would have been glad to prolong his stay a little, but of course kept this to himself, and was at the place appointed ahead of time, all in readiness for the journey.

To his great satisfaction he found that his trip down the river was to be made in a large canoe with four Indian paddlers, and as his travelling companion an English officer, Captain Lindsay, who also carried despatches.

Captain Lindsay was a fine, frank, hearty fellow, only a few years older than Seth, whose genial manner won Seth's heart at once, and he on his part was attracted by the handsome, stalwart youth who had already distinguished himself in active service.

The prospects for a pleasant journey were therefore altogether bright, and Seth bade goodbye to Major Rogers in the best of spirits.

The passage down the noble Hudson in the beautiful autumn weather in such congenial company was a delightful experience to Seth. Captain Lindsay was a capital talker, and held Seth's attention for hours while he told of what he had seen and learned in other parts of the world, for he had been an extensive traveller; and then he drew Seth out as to what he had been through, and evinced keen interest in his descriptions of forest life and adventure.

"I should like to join your Rangers for a while," he said. "I wonder would Major Rogers have me?"

"Oh, I'm sure he would," responded Seth emphatically. "But," he added in a quieter tone, "it's a very hard life as well as a dangerous one. When we're out on a scouting party we sometimes come very near starving, and we always have to sleep on the ground, for we never take tents with us."

"Oh, I imagine I could stand that as well as the others," returned the Captain, smiling. "If I get the opportunity I must have a talk with your commander about it."

"If you do I will say all I can in your favor," said Seth, rather bashfully, whereat Captain Lindsay thanked him, and they both felt that they were better friends than ever.

Their Indians paddled steadily and well and the lovely landscape slipped smoothly by as they glided seaward until at last the clustered roofs of the city came into view, and Seth's heart beat high with expectation.

"Is New York much bigger than Boston?" he asked of his companion.

"Why no," was the answer. "If anything, Boston is bigger than New York just now, although, if I'm not much mistaken, New York will in time become the larger city. But they are so different, as you will soon see for yourself,

and I hardly know which you will like better, although for my own part I prefer New York, probably because I have many more friends there. By the way, have you any friend in the city?"

"Not one. I don't know a single person there," replied Seth, rather ruefully.

"Then I shall have the pleasure of introducing you to my friends," said the Captain, beaming upon him. "I'll see to it that you are not lonely."

And he was as good as his word. Knowing the city well, he went at once to where comfortable quarters could be had, and after they had secured their rooms he guided Seth to the proper place to deliver his documents before attending to his own business.

Seth was very well pleased to find that he would not have to return to Albany for a week, and under the kind direction of his accomplished friend he gave himself up to the enjoyment of his new surroundings.

The prosperous city, already beginning to outgrow its Dutch quaintness, was full of interest for him, and when Captain Lindsay was otherwise engaged he found it easy to pass the time roaming around, and making acquaintance with the citizens, for he never hesitated about asking questions, and there was something so frank and boyish in his manner that he rarely failed to elicit courteous replies.

Once he went with the Captain to a military dinner at the headquarters, and was greatly impressed by the elegance and splendor of the entertainment, which he could not help comparing in his mind with the bravest show they had ever been able to make at the forts.

As was the custom of the time, the guests stayed long at table and drank deeply of the many varieties of wine so plentifully provided; but Seth, to whom wine-drinking was an unacquired habit, did not follow their example, confining his potations to cold water, and as it turned out, this was very fortunate, for he needed all his wits before the night ended.

Captain Lindsay was enjoying himself too much to take measure of the wine he drank. As a natural consequence he rather overdid it, and when at last the convivial gathering broke up he was not just in the state to see himself home.

This duty of course Seth undertook, but with some misgiving, for his friend was in a very boisterous humor, and not at all disposed to take the most direct route to their lodgings. In fact he wanted to finish the night by kicking up all the rumpus he could.

Nevertheless by dexterous management Seth had got him more than half the distance, when on turning a corner they almost ran into a knot

of men who were engaged in a war of words that evidently precluded a resort to fists.

Captain Lindsay unintentionally lurched against one of the men, who turned upon him and demanded with a foul oath what he meant by striking him.

Seth, realizing the danger of the situation, hastened to apologize for his companion and to explain that no offence was intended.

Had the Captain only been sober he too would have perceived the need of diplomacy, since the men were manifestly roughs of the worst type; but the wine had stolen his wits, and, incensed at the man's insulting language, he retorted, as he laid his hand upon his sword:

"How dare you speak to me like that? Do you want me to run you through?"

At the sound of his voice the other men forgot their quarrel, and turned to see what was the matter. Instantly they scented the prospect of a row, and drew themselves together in front of Captain Lindsay and Seth in a manner that boded no good to either.

With a quick movement Seth pulled his friend back against the wall of the house so that they could not be attacked in the rear, and then whispering to him urgently, "Let me have it, please," he drew his sword from the scabbard and put himself in an attitude of defence.

It was deftly done, and just in time, for the

ruffian whom Captain Lindsay had jolted was just about to aim a blow at him with his clenched fist, which would certainly have felled him to the ground.

Foiled for the moment he quickly pulled himself together for another attempt, but Seth met this with the point of the sword, giving him a slash across the knuckles that made him retreat instantly, and set up a furious howl of pain as he frantically waved his bleeding hand.

The sight of the flashing steel, and its effective use upon one of their members, disconcerted the roughs, and they gave back before Seth as he swung his sword menacingly in their faces.

This advantage, however, could be only temporary. Although happily their assailants had no fire-arms, some carried bludgeons, and the rest could quickly pick up brick-bats from the street with which they could bombard and batter the two officers out of their senses, if not to death.

All this time Seth's keen glances had been darting to this side and that in quest of some haven where they might take refuge; and just as the rowdies hesitated before his circling blade, he caught sight of a doorway a few yards distant which seemed to offer what he sought.

"Now then, captain," he cried in his ear, grasping his arm firmly with his left hand, "This way for our lives."

Captain Lindsay was already sufficiently sobered by their perilous situation to take in Seth's meaning, and to obey him. Together they darted to the doorway, their action being so sudden that they had safely gained it ere the others realized what they were about.

CHAPTER XX

SCOUTING IN A NEW FIELD

With a chorus of horrid oaths the ruffians rushed after them; but Seth, thrusting Captain Lindsay into the doorway ahead of him, swung around and pinked the foremost fellow on the shoulder, causing him to fall back with a roar of pain, and ere the next one could come on, he had the heavy door closed in his face and his foot braced against it.

The men on the outside were striving furiously to force the door in when a window above them was flung up and a night-capped head appeared with the muzzle of a big blunderbuss in close proximity.

The worthy Dutch burgher, whose dwelling had been thus rudely invaded, aroused from his slumbers demanded the meaning of the uproar; and getting no answer, either in his anger or in nervousness pulled the trigger of his clumsy firearm, whose charge of small shot showered upon the backs of the men below, inflicted many a painful, if not dangerous wound.

The effect of this utterly unexpected broadside certainly left nothing to be desired, for the

startled and smitten roughs, fearing, no doubt, lest something worse should follow, incontinently took to their heels, and a moment later the street was vacant and silent save for the echoes of their heavy footfalls as they fled.

Having thus disposed of the disturbers of his peace who were outside the door, the master of the house now turned his attention to those who were inside; and presently appearing at the top of the stairs with a light in one hand and the blunderbuss in the other, he roared out:

"What do you do there? Speak or I shoot!" whereupon Seth stepped forward, and bowing low, said in a most respectful tone:

"We are two of the King's officers, sir, who were set upon by the ruffians outside, and took refuge in your doorway, which was fortunately open to us."

The good man was mollified at once. Indeed, the idea of affording protection to two officers evidently pleased him, and he responded with a gratified chuckle:

"You are most welcome to my house, gentlemen. As for those scoundrels who set upon you, they've got a lesson from my old friend here," and he patted his big firing-piece, "that they will not soon forget, and have gone to think it over."

"Did you shoot them, sir?" asked Seth eagerly.

"That I did. They got the whole charge among them," laughed the burgher as he began to descend the stairs. "It won't kill any of them, but they'll feel sore over it for a while."

By this time Captain Lindsay had quite recovered his self-control, and when the burgher reached the bottom of the stairs he advanced and with a sweeping bow said:

"We thank you, worthy sir, from our hearts, for the timely shelter your house afforded us, and regret having thus disturbed your rest. If the rascals have gone we need not trespass upon your kindness any longer, but will at once take our departure."

The good man made light of the matter, and would fain have persuaded them to remain under his roof until morning; but to this they would not consent, and so after the exchange of further courtesies they took their leave, and had no further difficulty in reaching their lodgings.

On the following day Seth reluctantly bade good-bye to New York and to his friend who was to remain there, and started on the return trip to Albany, which was made in good time and without special incident.

At Albany he found that Major Rogers had gone to Fort Edward, leaving instructions for him to join him there, as that point would be their centre of operations for the present.

His pleasant holiday had done him a world of

good, and he went back to duty with renewed vigor and determination to fulfil his part to the best of his ability in the work of not only recovering what had been lost, but of making such gains in the struggle with the French as would result in their ultimate abandonment of the whole field.

During the autumn and the early part of the winter he was not long at a time idle, for General Loudon had in contemplation a winter attack upon Ticonderoga, whereby the loss of Fort William Henry was to be avenged, and there was a demand for all possible information concerning the condition of the French fortress and the strength of its garrison.

Poor Captain Habecourt, who was in command at Ticonderoga, found the Rangers very troublesome. They seemed to have no fear of him whatever, and sometimes were audacious enough to come up to the very ramparts.

One midwinter day they captured two soldiers within sight of the fort, and killed a number of cattle, leaving tied to the horns of one of them a note addressed to the commandant in these saucy terms:

"I am obliged to you, sir, for the rest you have allowed me to take and the fresh meat you have sent me. I shall take good care of my prisoners. My compliments to the Marquis of Montcalm. ROGERS."

Seth took a particular interest in the winter's work because of the understanding that it was by way of preparation for the attack which would be made ere spring; and consequently he felt greatly disappointed when the design was abandoned, and the information gathered at the cost of so much danger and hardship not put to any account.

In the course of a talk with Major Rogers he opened his mind freely, and expressed in pretty strong terms his opinion of the authorities who were so liable to change their plans, and so slow to carry out anything they did decide upon.

"Perhaps you should like to try another field," remarked the Major, giving him a shrewd look, while the suspicion of a smile curved the corners of his strong mouth.

There was a significance in his tone that Seth did not miss, and he bent his eyes earnestly upon the veteran as he exclaimed:

"In another field? How do you mean? What chance have I to be anywhere else?"

"Well, that depends," responded the Major, the enigmatical smile becoming more pronounced. "Have you ever heard of Fort Duquesne?

"Of course I have, answered Seth. "It's over there in the West, and it's doing an immense amount of harm."

"Right you are, my son; and what would you think of joining an expedition to attack it?"

"Nothing would suit me better," cried Seth, springing to his feet, and standing before the Major with his face all in a glow. "Are you going, sir? And can I go with you?"

"No, Seth, I am not going myself," was the reply, uttered in a grave tone as of regret. "I am needed too much here; but there's nothing to prevent you going if you want to do so, although I confess I shall be sorry to lose you."

He then went on to explain that at last it had been determined to attack Fort Duquesne, the French stronghold in the West, which was a veritable hornet's nest; that a strong force was shortly to be sent against it, starting from Philadelphia, and that a request had been made for a detachment of Rangers to act as scouts in advance of the main body.

"It is likely that a score of my men will go in answer to this request," he continued; "and if you would like to go in command of them, Seth, you have only to say the word."

"Then I say it," responded Seth promptly. "It doesn't look as if there was going to be much done here for some time; and I'd rather be on active service than idling about."

"You may consider the matter settled, then," said the Major. "I will tell you more definitely about the arrangements in a day or two."

Seth went back to his room that night highly elated at the prospect before him, and full of gratitude to his good friend, Major Rogers, who had thus given him the first chance of accepting the commission.

"He seems to have no lack of faith in me," he mused. "I shall do my best not to disappoint him."

A few days later he set out for Philadelphia with his company of twenty men, carefully chosen by Major Rogers, who considered that they had the reputation of the Rangers in their keeping, and gave them many a sage injunction as he parted from them.

Naturally enough Seth felt very proud of his responsibility, for, although he would of course be under the command of others, still the very nature of the service he had to render was such as to leave him much freedom of judgment and action, and the rest of the Rangers would take all their orders from him as their supreme officer.

On reaching Philadelphia, and reporting to Brigadier Forbes, who was charged with the command of the expedition, he was ordered to go on to Raystown in the Alleghany mountains, whither the advance guard had already proceeded.

Here he found several thousand men hard at work digging entrenchments, and setting up palisades as though they meant to remain per-

manently. There were Virginians in hunting-shirts, Highlanders in kilt and plaid, and Royal Americans in the regulation scarlet, and they were all of one mind in grumbling at their General for keeping them toiling with pick and spade instead of hurrying them on to attack the fort.

The truth was, a difficulty had arisen about the route to be taken, some being of opinion that they should proceed in a direct course to Fort Duquesne, hewing a new road through the forest; and others, that the best way was to march to Fort Cumberland, and thence follow the road made by the ill-fated Braddock.

Lieutenant-Colonel Bouguet was in command at Raystown, and under instructions from him Seth went on to Fort Cumberland with a message for its commandant, who was no other than George Washington, already risen to the rank of colonel, although but twenty-six years of age.

Little did Seth imagine when he presented himself to the tall, sinewy officer with the strong, serene countenance, that he was talking with the man destined in the course of years to be called "The Father of his Country," and to win an unquestioned place among the heroes of the world.

He found him very gracious in his manner; and, after the message had been duly delivered and acknowledged, much interested in the opera-

tions at Lake George and Lake Champlain, concerning which he asked him many questions.

"The fame of Rogers' Rangers has reached us in Virginia," he said, "and I am very glad we are to have the help of a few of you in our present campaign. There will be plenty for you to do, I am sure, before our work is finished."

He then went on to speak about the route which should be followed.

"I am quite clear in my own mind that the right thing in every respect will be to take the same way as Braddock did. It will save a great deal of time and labor, and having been taught wisdom by the awful fate of Braddock's expedition, we are not likely to fall into the same trap."

Seth was a good listener, and the respectful attention paid by him to Colonel Washington made a most favorable impression upon the latter, who said to him on parting as he warmly shook his hand:

"I hope to meet you again, Ensign Allen; it is plain to me that you can render us very valuable service, and I trust that you will have the good fortune to get through this campaign unharmed."

Seth thanked him heartily for his courtesy and good wishes, and left him with the feeling that this was the sort of leader under whom he would like to serve. He accordingly felt very much disappointed when, in spite of Washing-

ton's earnest protests and plea for the other route, it was decided to cut a new road through the forest, because it would be shorter, and when once made would form a readier line of communication, although to make it would consume a vast amount of time and labor.

Brigadier Forbes being in total ignorance of the strength of the enemy, and what they were doing, Seth received instructions to go forward with a scouting party and gain all the information possible. In addition to his own men he was given a number of Indians, principally Cherokees and Catawbas, whom he would have been just as well pleased to do without, but his opinion was not asked in the matter.

The country through which he had to make his way was one vast wilderness of trees and brushwood without a trace of human habitation, as trackless as the ocean itself, so that Seth, who instinctively distrusted the Indians, and relied upon them as little as possible, found he needed all his knowledge of wood-craft and experience in pathfinding to prevent his going astray.

It was also necessary to take the utmost precaution against being ambushed by the French or their Indian allies, the Hurons, Miamis and Pottawatomis, who might get knowledge of their movements and manage to waylay them.

Nevertheless the scouting party made good progress through the stern and silent maze, and

"NOW THE PALE-FACED CHIEFTAIN CANNOT BE KILLED."

without being discovered reached the neighborhood of Fort Duquesne.

Here the Indians declared that they would go no farther until they had duly performed certain mystic ceremonies which would protect the whole party against mishap.

Seth was inclined at first to make light of their request, but on second thoughts considered it best to humor them, and so the Rangers gravely joined in the proceedings.

Having painted themselves in startling style and practised certain incantations, the meaning of which was lost upon their white brethren, the Indians then gathered close about their chief, who held an otter-skin bag from which he took various charms, and tied them about the necks of the others.

The bag itself, much to Seth's surprise, he hung upon his neck, saying with utmost solemnity:

"Now the pale-faced chieftain cannot be killed. The bullets of the enemy will be turned away by the medicine at his neck. He will be safe no matter how many shoot at him."

It was said with such entire sincerity that in spite of himself Seth could not help feeling impressed, and he thanked the chief warmly, saying as he shook his hand:

"You are very kind to give me this medicine.

I will take good care of it, and I hope it will take good care of me."

Thus armed against fate the party then resumed its cautious advance toward the fort.

CHAPTER XXI

AN EASY TRIUMPH

Had the neighborhood of Fort Duquesne been overrun with scouts as was that of Ticonderoga, the presence of Seth's party could hardly have remained unknown, but there was not at all the same vigilance exercised, and consequently the venturesome intruders upon hostile ground were able to make their way unchallenged to an eminence afterward called Grant's Hill, where, well hidden by trees and bushes, they could look right down upon the fort.

Now the Indians had been reporting to the English commander that the French were very strong, in fact that their numbers quite equalled if they did not surpass his, but after Seth had scrutinized the place he exclaimed:

"Those rascally Indians have been lying, as usual. The French are nothing like as strong as we are. If our men were only here now we could take the fort easily. What a pity they're not! And at the rate they're getting ahead they won't be here for months. If only Colonel Washington had his way things would be differ-

ent. But it's the old story. I'm sick of the slow way they have of doing things."

He had good reason to feel impatient. The work of road-making through the dense forest was exceedingly heavy and tedious. Over the main range of the Alleganies, hewing, digging, blasting, laying fascines and gabions to support the track along the sides of steep declivities, or worming their way like moles through the jungle of swamp and forest, the soldiers toiled at their tremendous task while the weeks went by, whereas if the Braddock route had been followed their progress would have been comparatively rapid.

Not satisfied with having got a very good idea of the French fortress and of the strength of its garrison, Seth had it in mind to take back with him a prisoner or two, as Major Rogers was wont to do whenever possible, and so, instead of setting out at once on the return journey, he moved from the hill and lay in ambush by the road leading northward from the fort.

"We mustn't be in a hurry to let our presence be known," he told his men. "If the French get the alarm we may be cut off and captured. So we'll keep as quiet as possible until we see a good chance of taking a prisoner."

They had not long to wait, for that same afternoon appeared a small party of soldiers sent out by the Commandant de Leignerie to see if

there were any signs of the approach of the reinforcements and provisions which he expected from Canada, and which were now overdue.

They were in a gay mood, joking and laughing with each other, being evidently well pleased at getting away from the confinement of the fort for a little outing.

"Let them go on a bit," whispered Seth to his men waiting for the signal to rush upon the unsuspecting soldiers. "The farther they are from the fort the better. We'll follow them close."

Not until they had gone another mile was the command given, and then the Rangers dashed out of the woods upon the startled Frenchmen with such suddenness that they had not time to lift their guns to their shoulders, and were easily made prisoners, with one exception.

This was the officer in charge of them, a stalwart youth with a sinister countenance, who whipped out his sword at the first alarm, and made a slash at Seth that would have cleft his skull, had he not cleverly parried it with the barrel of his musket.

Before the Frenchman could recover himself for another stroke Seth drove the muzzle of his musket into his ribs, knocking the wind out of him so that he went down in a heap on the road, groaning with pain.

If Seth's object had been to kill, the whole

party might have been despatched without difficulty, but it was not in his heart to take their lives when they were at his mercy. Even the officer who had come pretty near putting an end to him he had no thought of doing away with.

Yet now that he had the prisoners he was in a considerable quandary as to their disposition, for they were too many to take them all back with him, while if he set some of them free they would of course make all haste back to the fort and rouse the garrison to pursuit.

After puzzling over the problem for some minutes he saw no other way out of the difficulty than to adopt the expedient of releasing all but two of the soldiers, on their taking oath not to return to the fort for twenty-four hours, which would allow the Rangers ample time to get beyond all possibilty of pursuit.

The two prisoners he retained were the officer and one of the soldiers, with whom he now hastened back, feeling, as he well might, well satisfied with the success of his enterprise.

The officer proved sulkily silent, and no information could be extracted from him, but the soldier made amends by being very communicative, and freely answering Seth's questions, whereby it was made clear that Fort Duquesne would prove an easy conquest if the attack upon it could only be made promptly.

When Colonel Washington heard this, he was all the more put out that his advice in regard to the route had not been adopted.

"It is really too bad," he said, his troubled countenance showing how deep was his concern, "that Brigadier Forbes should have been persuaded to take the longest way to the fort. But it is too late now to change the plan. We must only carry it out as best we can. I am sure that when he hears your report he will feel bound to admit that my counsel should have been followed."

Seth had by this time come to have such an admiration for Washington that he was ready to accept unquestioningly any opinion he might hold, and it made him quite wrathy to think that the views of so able a leader should not prevail.

He showed this spirit so plainly in presenting his report as to bring upon himself a sharp rebuke from the commander-in-chief, who, being a somewhat testy Scotchman with a good opinion of himself, did not take kindly to having his wisdom questioned by a mere youth.

"You presume too much, young sir," he said, in a tone of manifest irritation. "Your business is simply to give an accurate report of what you had ascertained. You have nothing to do with what *we* may see fit to determine upon."

Seth flushed deeply, and was tempted to re-

tort that when what he had learned went to show so plainly that no time should be lost he felt bound to say so, but his better sense prevailed, and he accepted the reproof in silence.

Thenceforward the tedious work of piercing the wilderness went steadily on, but it was well into November ere the English force had got near enough to Fort Duquesne to prepare for striking the first blow.

Washington had opened the way by cutting a road to within a day's march of the fort, and in order that the advance might be as rapid as possible, no artillery save a few light pieces was taken.

On the evening of the twenty-fourth of November the English force, which consisted of twenty-five hundred picked men without tents or baggage, and carrying only knapsacks and blankets, encamped by Turkey Creek in readiness to attempt the attack on the following day.

Brigadier Forbes, although suffering so from sickness that he had to be carried on a litter, was in command, and with him were Colonels Washington, Bouquet, and Montgomery, while the detachment was made up of Royal Americans, Highlanders, and Provincial troops.

Their progress had hitherto been unopposed, but this was no guarantee that they might not find the French blocking their way.

About midnight the camp was aroused by the

sound of a heavy explosion that came booming over the western woods.

What could it mean? Had a magazine exploded by accident at the fort, or was it possible that the French were blowing up their works in despair of being able to defend them ?

Seth determined that he would lose no time in finding out, and by break of day he was off with his Rangers at a pace they only could maintain through the leafless forest until they came out upon the open plain in which stood Fort Duquesne.

"Deserted and destroyed, as I live!" Seth cried as with one swift glance he took in the state of affairs. "Not a Frenchman left and the whole place in ruins. Well, I declare, and what will our folks think of it? I shouldn't wonder if they'll be not a little disappointed."

There was not a sign of life about the place, and after a hasty examination of the premises Seth, leaving most of his men on guard in case some of the Indians should attempt to loot the place, made all haste back to the main body.

Half way thither he met Colonel Washington at the head of his regiment of Provincials, and told him what had taken place.

"I am not at all surprised," he said in his calm way. "In fact I should have been more surprised had the French made any defence,

but I am sorry that they have destroyed the fort, as it would have been useful to us in the future. However, there's no helping it now. You again have the pleasure to be the bearer of good news, Ensign Allen. I trust it may always be your fortune."

Seth thanked him for his kind words, and continued on his way until he came to the litter of the suffering General, to whom he reported what he had seen."

"Ah, ha!" he exclaimed, "and so they have run off like curs after first blowing up the fort. Drat them, I wish they had stayed long enough to let us have a crack at them. They owe us a long score which now we'll have no chance to make them pay. Tut, tut, it's very provoking," and so he went on, fully confirming Seth's shrewd anticipation.

The work of destruction was so complete, the barracks and storehouses being burned to the ground, and the fortifications blown up, that the victors could make no use of what was left, and to provide defence and shelter for those of their number on whom the dangerous task was to fall of keeping what had been won, were compelled to plant a stockade around a cluster of traders' cabins and soldiers' huts which had been left intact.

This temporary apology for a fort Forbes called Pittsburg, in honor of the Prime Minis-

ter, William Pitt, and it was the germ of the great city of the present day.

A small garrison of Provincial troops having been left to hold Pittsburg for the winter, the remainder of the force returned to Philadelphia, having achieved a solid, if not brilliant, success, for the conquest of Fort Duquesne opened the Great West to English enterprise, took from France one-half of her savage allies, and relieved the western borders of the provinces from the awful scourge of Indian war, so that from Southern New York to North Carolina the frontier people had good reason to bless the names of the steadfast and much enduring soldier, Brigadier Forbes, and his loyal assistants, Colonels Washington and Bouquet.

Seeing no prospect of further service there in the near future, Seth with his Rangers went back to Fort Edward, where they found Major Rogers and the rest of the men at their old work, but impatiently looking forward to an active and eventful campaign when the winter had passed away.

Seth's greeting from his chief could not have been more cordial.

"I am right glad to see you back, my boy," he exclaimed as he gave a warm grasp of the hand, "and I'm curious to hear all about your doings down South. I hope you kept up the credit of the Rangers."

"I'll leave you to judge of that after you've heard what I have to tell," Seth responded archly, and then he proceeded to give an account of his experiences.

The Major listened with lively interest, asking many a question, and making frequent comments. He evidently enjoyed the recital until Seth came to speak about Colonel Washington, and then his ardent admiration for the Virginia officer seemed to displease him, and he broke in with:

"What makes you think so much of that man? What great things has he done, any way?"

Seth, not perceiving that the question was prompted by a spirit of jealousy which he had roused, for Major Rogers was one who could not brook a divided allegiance, made haste to take Washington's part, and before he realized it found himself involved in a controversy that threatened to grow uncomfortably warm, so for fear of giving offence to his friend he ceased arguing the matter, and started off on another track.

But his eyes were opened, and he took care not to mention the name of Washington to the Major again.

A few days after his return he received the gratifying news of his promotion to the rank of lieutenant, which made him very happy, and all

the more eager for the renewal of active hostilities in order that he might have the opportunity of achieving further advance, for it was the ambition of his heart to become a captain, and have command of a troop of Rangers.

While he was away on the Fort Duquesne expedition General Abercrombie had made a futile attempt to take Ticonderoga, and had then withdrawn his forces and gone into winter quarters. The French at the other end of the lake had done the same, and only an occasional scouting party kept alive the embers of war.

Montcalm, who commanded the French, from time to time sent out war parties to harass his opponents, and one of them under La Carne succeeded in surprising and destroying a large wagon train.

When General Abercrombie heard of it he ordered Major Rogers to take a strong party of Rangers and Provincials, and to go in pursuit of the enemy. As a matter of course Seth went with him.

CHAPTER XXII

AT CLOSE GRIPS WITH DEATH

MAJOR ROGERS' force on this occasion was the largest he had thus far commanded, comprising as it did a big body of Connecticut men, and a small detachment of regulars, chiefly light infantry, bringing the total up to seven hundred in all.

They marched through the forest to where Whitehall now stands, and thence made their way up Wood Creek to old Fort Anne, long abandoned and falling into decay. Here in the already overgrown clearing that surrounded the ruin they encamped.

Up to this time Rogers had observed his usual caution, commanding silence on the march, and forbidding fires at night, but having discovered no signs of the enemy, and led into over-confidence, perhaps, by the unusual strength of his party, he was rash enough to accept a wager with one of the officers of the light infantry as to which was the best marksman, and the following morning was set for the trial of skill.

When Seth learned of this he was much troubled, for although he had not come upon any

trace of the enemy, he somehow had a conviction that they were not far away, and he ventured to suggest to his chief that it might not be wise to have musket firing until the neighborhood had been more thoroughly examined.

But the Major took his remonstrance amiss.

"When I wish your advice I will ask you for it, young man," he said, with an asperity of tone that made Seth's countenance redden. "I am quite sure there are no French or Indians within cannon sound of us, so you need give yourself no concern about what I propose to do."

Seth knew that it was vain to argue the matter, and said no more, although the foreboding of approaching disaster grew stronger through the night.

Soon after daylight the shooting match took place, and Major Rogers proved an easy victor, but the triumph, which evidently gave him great satisfaction, was obtained at a fearful cost, for the sound of the shots reached the ears of a large band of French and Indians under command of the famous partisan Marin, who at once took steps to reconnoitre and ambuscade his reckless enemy.

All around the old fort the forest had formerly been cut down and burned, but during the long years of neglect the opening thus made became overgrown with bushes and saplings so densely

as to be impassable save where a narrow Indian path traversed it.

Along this path Major Rogers and his men were forced to march in single file, and so soon as the shooting contest was settled they slung their packs and set out.

The Connecticut men were in the lead, then came the regulars, and the Rangers brought up the rear.

Never in his life before had Seth felt so depressed in spirits, although he could in no wise account to himself for it.

"I'm sure there's trouble coming," he said to the Ranger who walked next him. "I do wish they hadn't been firing at the mark. The sound of their guns will go far this still morning."

The words had hardly left his lips when the noise of rapid firing came over the tops of the bushes, and he exclaimed excitedly:

"I knew it! I knew it! The French have ambushed us. Quick now to the front!"

And he dashed off through the brushwood, followed by his men. They had, of course, great difficulty in making their way, although the yells of Indians mingling with the reports of the muskets made clear to them that Seth's surmise as to what had taken place was correct, and they were wild to get to the assistance of their imperilled comrades.

What had happened was this: When the

head of the line emerged from the tangled shrubbery, and was about to enter the forest there broke forth a horrid chorus of savage yells, and suddenly the place became alive with Indians.

One of them, a huge Caughnawaga chief, with uplifted hatchet sprang at the foremost of the English, who threw up his gun, and pulled trigger. But unhappily it missed fire, and the next moment he fell with cloven skull.

Then the firing began. The French and the Indians, lying across the path in a semicircle, had the double advantage of surprise and of position, and the Connecticut men at first fell back among the bushes in disorder, but presently rallied, and held their opponents in check until the regulars and Rangers could force their way through the thickets to their support.

So dense was the brushwood that it was only after much loss of time and with great difficulty that the English were able to assume some kind of order in front of the enemy, and even then each man was forced to fight for himself as best he could.

The fulfilment of his foreboding cast no spell over Seth's courage. He plunged into the conflict as though he bore a charmed life, and many an Indian fell at the crack of his gun.

Yet with the wisdom of the true woodsman he did not expose himself unnecessarily, but took

advantage to the utmost of such cover as their position afforded.

The fusillade continued for nearly two hours with heavy loss on both sides, but without the combatants coming to close quarters, as the French evidently feared a hand-to-hand struggle, and the English leaders, having no idea of the actual strength of their assailants, did not deem it prudent to attempt to charge upon them.

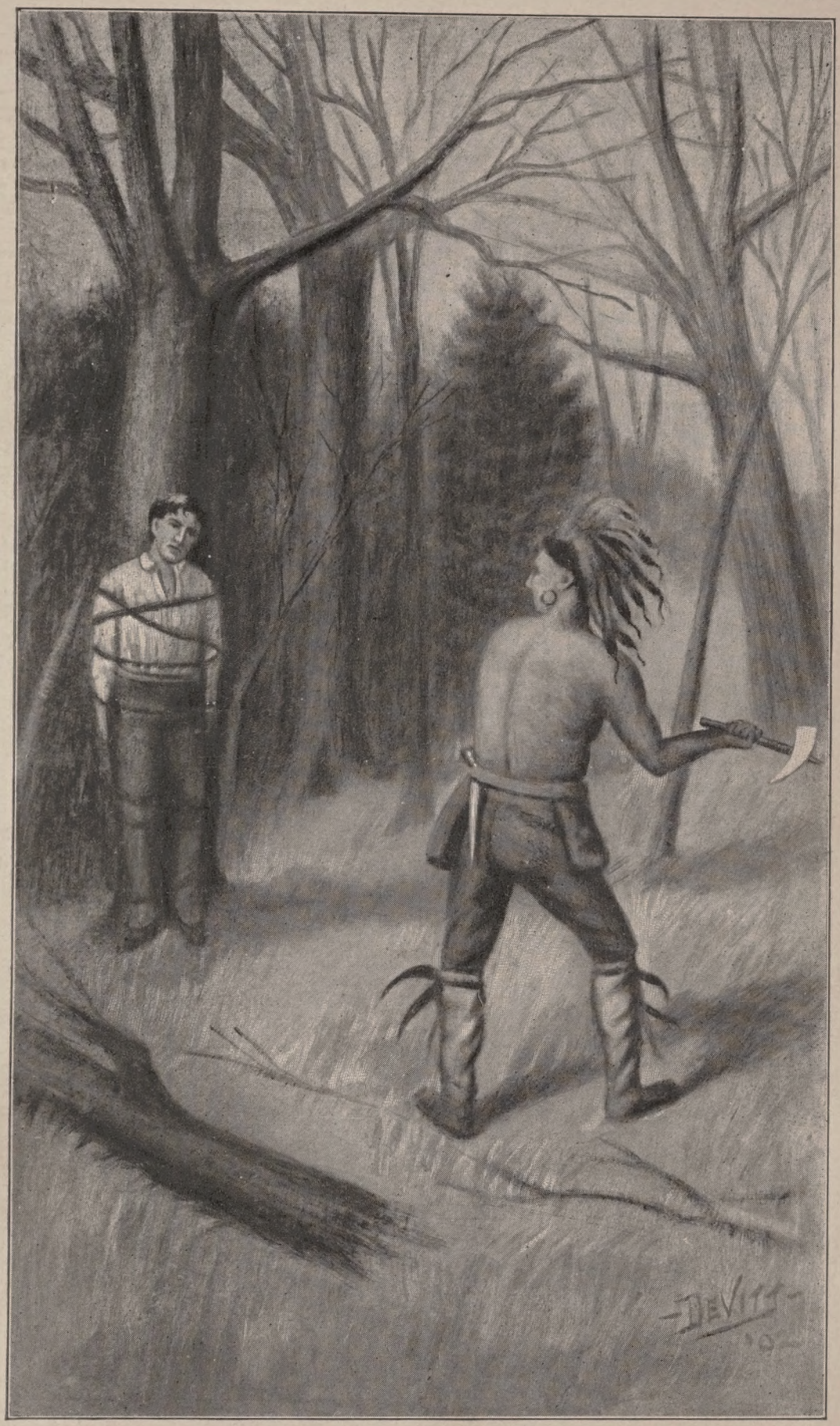
The fierce and bloody conflict was at its height when Seth, moving forward to get a better position for shooting, suddenly found himself face to face with three Indians, who had crept upon him through the underbrush.

His gun was empty, and he had no time to reload it, but he felled one of the savages with the butt, and was about to treat another in the same fashion when the third sprang at him and tripping him cleverly, flung him heavily to the ground, where both threw themselves on him, and pinned him fast.

They were powerful braves, and, although Seth struggled frantically to free himself, they soon had his hands bound with thongs which hurt cruelly, and rendered him helpless.

Then, each seizing an arm, they rushed him to the rear of their own line, where they lashed him to a tree so that he could not move a limb.

All this time Seth had not spoken. He knew



IT WAS A TERRIBLE ORDEAL FOR SETH.

how vain was any appeal for mercy, and steeled his heart for the torture that was sure to be his fate.

Having secured him to the tree, his captors, letting the battle take care of itself, proceeded to amuse themselves in characteristic fashion by throwing their tomahawks at Seth's head with the idea of seeing which could come closest to without actually striking their living target.

It was fine fun for the dusky fiends no doubt, but it was a terrible ordeal for Seth, and yet the brave fellow hardly blinked as the cruel steel flashed past his eyes, and buried itself in the tree with a vicious thud, sometimes severing a stray lock of his hair in its flight.

Nor were the redskins the only ones to act thus inhumanly, for when they had wearied of their amusement, a French officer came up, who after assailing the helpless captive with vigorous abuse, thrust the muzzle of his gun violently against his body, pretending to fire it, and then struck him in the face with the butt, inflicting a painful bruise.

Still Seth maintained his stoical silence, for he had determined that although they should tear him to pieces, or burn him with slow fire, they should not extort from him any sign or sound of weakness.

When the retreat began the Indians unloosed Seth from the tree, stripped him of nearly all

his clothing, bound his wrists together so tightly that the pain was intense, and then placing upon his bare back as many of the packs of their wounded as could be piled up, they hurried him along until at last in sheer exhaustion he fell to the ground, and could not move despite the blows showered upon him.

He might have been despatched there and then had not a French officer, moved to compassion by his desperate plight, persuaded the Indians to untie his hands, and lighten his crushing burden. They also gave him a pair of moccasins to protect his lacerated feet, from which they had taken his shoes and stockings.

His misery being thus somewhat mitigated, Seth was able to go on and to stagger under his load until his captors encamped for the night.

But cruelly as he had suffered already there was worse yet to come, for, having removed the last vestige of clothing, they tied him to a tree, and set to work to surround him with brushwood.

"Merciful Heaven, they are going to burn me!" he groaned. "If they would only kill me first! How can I stand the terrible torture?"

Nevertheless he nerved himself to bear the awful ordeal, not deigning to utter a cry for mercy.

The savages were evidently impressed by his

heroic bearing, and delayed lighting the wood, while they danced about him, brandishing their tomahawks in his face, and trying to make him flinch from their pretended blows.

In the midst of their fiendish frolicking there fell a sudden shower of rain which soaked the wood so that it would not light, and this seemed to offer some hope of a respite for their victim. But no sooner had the rain ceased than the merciless wretches resumed their horrid preparations, and this time succeeded in surrounding him with a circle of brushwood which they set on fire, and then yelled and danced before him in delight at his vain endeavors to avoid the rising flames.

His case certainly seemed desperate to the last degree. Thus far he had held the hope that his tormentors might stop short of taking his life in order to carry him back to Canada as a trophy of their prowess, but when the fire began to scorch his naked limbs he gave himself up to despair.

The flames were climbing to his waist. A few more minutes and it would have been all over with him, when into the midst of the dancing, yelling crowd there burst a stalwart figure shouting in French:

"You red devils, what are you about? How dare you torture one of our prisoners like that and disgrace us all? If I had known what you

were about I would have put a stop to it before this."

It was Marin, the Canadian leader of the war party, who, on hearing what was taking place, had with courageous humanity rushed to the scene, determined to interpose at all hazards.

Nor was he content with upbraiding the Indians for their cruelty, but dashed at the blazing brushwood, tore it away from Seth, cut his bonds with a slash of his knife, and dragged him out of danger.

The whole thing was done so quickly and in so dauntless a fashion that the savages were completely taken back, and when Marin, having berated them further, placed Seth under the protection of a Caughnawaga chief, who promised to be responsible for him, they acquiesced in the arrangement without a murmur.

The Caughnawaga accepted the trust reposed in him, and at first seemed disposed to treat Seth kindly, but the means he took to insure the prisoner not attempting his escape, while certainly effective, were by no means considerate of his comfort, seeing that he stretched him on the ground in the form of a St. Andrew's cross with his wrists and ankles fastened to the stems of young trees.

Nor was he satisfied with this, but must needs place brushwood upon his body, and across it long slender saplings on the ends of which sev-

eral warriors lay down to sleep, so that Seth could not make the slightest movement without rousing them.

The misery of that night may hardly be conceived, since in addition to all the physical suffering, the proud, sensitive nature of the New Englander writhed as he realized what an utterly ludicrous figure he presented.

Next day after a painful march he reached Fort Ticonderoga, and was taken before Montcalm, who asked him a number of questions about the strength of the English forces, and their plans for the future.

But he got little light from Seth, who, thoroughly understanding the purpose of the examination, either evaded the questions, or firmly refused to reply to them, even though the French commander threatened to have him tortured if he did not answer in the way desired.

The end of it was that Montcalm, finding he could elicit nothing from him, ordered him to be sent up to Montreal as a prisoner of war.

CHAPTER XXIII

OUT OF CAPTIVITY INTO ACTION AGAIN

It was many days before Seth recovered from what he had endured at the hands of the Indians, and some of his injuries left scars which he bore for the remainder of his life.

At Montreal he found a number of his fellow-countrymen in the same plight as himself. They were fairly well treated, but of course kept under constant surveillance, and allowed little liberty of movement, so that their life soon became very monotonous, and each one of them cherished his own hopes of escape.

Now and again attempts were made, but they proved for the most part failures, the vigilance of the French and the incessant activity of the Indians rendering it wellnigh impossible to get safely away.

Of course Seth had no sooner recovered his strength than he likewise set his ingenuity to work upon the problem of regaining his freedom, but rack his brains as he might he could devise no scheme that seemed feasible, while the days grew into weeks, and the weeks into months of maddening monotony.

"I believe I'll go out of my mind if I don't get free soon," he said to one of his companions in captivity. "Just to think of all that's going on, and we have no hand in it. We might as well be dead and buried for all the good we are."

No wonder, indeed, if this forced inaction told hard upon the prisoners, and particularly upon those of them like Seth, whose delight it was to be in active service no matter how dangerous, as in their durance vile there reached them rumors of the tremendous effort England was putting forth to conquer Canada, and stirring accounts of the vast fleet which was pushing its way up the St. Lawrence River for the taking of Quebec. Nearly the whole force of the colony had been brought together at the threatened capital, where both Vaudreuil and Montcalm were making all possible preparations to meet the invaders, and Seth raged against the fate which kept him out of the arena of action, until at last he grew so desperate as to be ready to seize upon the wildest scheme for escape.

Such was his mood when all unexpectedly there came to him the chance he craved. During the early days of his imprisonment he had had the opportunity of doing a service for the wife of one of his guards, and thereby won her gratitude.

She had come from his own Province, and in spite of having lived many years in Canada her

heart still held a warm corner for her countrymen. Although Seth knew nothing of it he had been much in the good woman's mind, and she was possessed with the idea of enabling him to escape, but wisely kept her own counsel about it until the opportunity offered. Then she surprised him by taking him aside, and saying in a significant tone:

"Are you tired of being a prisoner here?"

"Of course I am," responded Seth, emphatically. "Tired to death of it. I don't know what I'll do if I can't manage to get out of this somehow."

"You would like to make your escape, then?" continued the woman.

Seth laughed bitterly as he answered:

"Why do you ask me that? You know as well as I do that I would give anything on earth to escape, and be with my men again."

The woman smiled at his earnestness.

"If I were to show you how you might escape, what would you do?"

Seth's face lit up, and his eyes dilated. He was about to say that he would do anything in the world for her, and then he checked himself, for the humiliating thought came that he, a poor penniless prisoner—did not have it in his power to reward her at all.

She quite understood how it was, and went on to say: "Do not mind about that. I meant

nothing. If I do help you to escape it will be because you come from my own country, and I shall not want anything from you."

She then proceeded to explain herself, and Seth listened with every nerve a-quiver.

It seemed that preparations were being made to send more soldiers down to Quebec by the river, and that a number of canoes duly supplied with stores were ready for the start in the morning. If Seth could contrive to get off with one of these canoes he might make his way down the river to where the English were encamped on the shore opposite Quebec.

Seth heard her with indescribable delight. The dangers and difficulties of the undertaking were as naught in his eyes, and he poured out his gratitude in the strongest words he could command.

Of course he could not make the venture alone. He must needs have a companion to help him in paddling the canoe.

But there could be no difficulty about that; one of his fellow-prisoners, Lieutenant Putnam of Connecticut, would be only too glad to join him, and, having arranged with the woman to meet her at midnight, he went off with bounding heart to find Putnam, and tell him the good news.

Putnam was at first inclined to suspect some trap.

"It seems too good to be true," he said doubtfully.

"Not a bit of it," replied Seth. "I'm sure the woman is to be trusted, and if you feel like holding back, why just say so, and I'll get somebody else."

But Putnam at once declared his readiness to share the venture, and they proceeded to perfect their plans.

The night proved favorable in every particular. It was very dark and still, and had it not been for the woman's perfect familiarity with the premises they could never have found their way to the landing-place where the canoes were drawn up.

Happily the sentries had fallen asleep, and there was no one to challenge them when they pushed off, after whispering their gratitude to the good woman who had so signally befriended them.

Out into the swift current they sent the canoe, and as they sped down stream their hearts beat high with hope, and they would have sung for joy had they dared.

"Isn't this wonderful?" Seth exclaimed when they were well out into the river. "After all our months of waiting for a chance to escape to have it come to us in this way! It seems like a dream."

"Thank Heaven it's a reality," responded

Putnam fervently. "And if we do reach the camp all right we may perhaps be in time to have a share in the taking of Quebec."

They paddled strongly and steadily until daybreak, and then sought out a secluded cove where they could go into hiding for the day.

There was no difficulty in this, the shores of the St. Lawrence being densely wooded, and they soon had their canoe concealed amongst the trees where no passer-by could discover it.

They slept soundly during the greater part of the day and as they were enjoying a hearty supper they saw a flotilla of canoes hastening down river.

"That's where our canoe rightfully belongs," laughed Seth, pointing to the heavy-laden craft. "I wonder what was said when they missed it. I hope our good friend did not get into any trouble on account of it."

"No fear of that," replied Putnam, "she's too clever to be found out. They'll just think we managed it ourselves somehow."

"But we'll have to be doubly careful with all those canoes ahead of us," said Seth. "What had we better do? Keep behind them, or try and get away ahead to-night?"

"Get ahead of them to-night by all means," responded Putnam, "even though they do pass us again next day."

And this is what they did day after day and

night after night, playing a unique and thrilling game of see-saw with the unwitting flotilla, which kept steadily on its way seaward, while they alternately led and followed in the rear.

Many a narrow escape from discovery they had. More than once it seemed impossible that they should evade detection. But by a series of happy chances they succeeded in keeping out of sight to the end of the journey.

Landing at Point Levi, which had been for some time in the possession of the English under General Wolfe, they met with a warm reception, and Seth was particularly pleased to find a band of Rangers forming part of the force there strongly entrenched. He was of, course, a welcome addition to the company, and had no difficulty in obtaining an officer's outfit, which enabled him to take his proper place among them.

The siege of Quebec had now been going on for many weeks, and although the English had firmly established themselves on the opposite shore of the St. Lawrence, as well as on the Island of Orleans below, and had wellnigh reduced the city itself to ruins, the French showed no signs of yielding, and seemed determined to maintain the struggle indefinitely.

Realizing that his operations, thus far, while no doubt greatly distressing the enemy, had not

brought the surrender of the city very much nearer, since it was nothing to lay Quebec in ruins if he could not also defeat the army that protected it, General Wolfe, with an ardor and daring that no difficulties could daunt, resolved to attempt an effective blow by striking the French army in flank or rear.

To accomplish this his plan was to land below Montmorenci Falls, ascend the lofty river bank, cross the stream at the first ford above the falls, and attack the enemy from that quarter.

The venture was made at night after several frigates had spent the day shelling the camp of the Chevalier de Levis, who occupied the heights just above the cataract.

A force of three thousand men in all, including a company of Rangers under Seth's command, landed before day-break a little below the cataract, where they were opposed by a troop of Canadians and Indians.

After a short but sharp encounter, with some loss on both sides, these were routed, and, led by the Rangers, the English made their way up the heights, gained the plateau above, and at once set about entrenching themselves, while Seth took his men into the forest in search of a place to ford the river.

It was a dangerous mission, for who could tell how many Indians lurked in the leafy fastnesses; but Seth was too happy at being once more in

the thick of things to give a thought to the perils of his position.

Following up the course of the tumultuous torrent he found it growing more placid and less deep, and felt confident of coming upon what he sought, when he was met by a large party of Indians, who poured a heavy fire upon his scanty ranks.

The bullets whistled all about him, and several of his men went down, but he stood his ground at first, returning the fire with good effect until it became so clear that the odds were overwhelmingly against him that he ordered a retreat.

Fortunately the sound of the firing brought the regulars up to his support, and the Indians were repulsed with heavy loss.

But the search for the ford was discontinued, as Wolfe decided it would be best to make his position thoroughly strong before doing anything else, and the French allowed him to fortify himself undisturbed.

Seth saw a great deal of the famous general at this time. His first impression was one of surprise. He could not understand how so renowned a commander could have so unimposing an appearance. His slight frame, homely features, and red hair had nothing martial about them, and only his clear, bright, and piercing eye gave any hint of the heroic soul within.

But as the days went by and he witnessed his amazing energy, his wonderful foresight, his thorough mastery of the art of warfare, and his dauntless courage, he came fairly to worship him, and to have implicit faith in his achieving the great thing he had undertaken.

"We may be a good while doing it, but we'll take Quebec just as surely as we stand here at this moment," he said to one of the English officers as they stood together looking toward the beleagured city. "Whatever General Wolfe has set his mind upon is bound to be done."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GLORIOUS VICTORY

THE weeks went by and still Montcalm held Quebec, and the English invaders made little progress toward wresting it from him. Flags of truce often passed between the hostile camps.

"You will demolish the town, no doubt," said the bearer of one of them, "but you shall never get inside of it."

To which Wolfe replied:

"I will have Quebec if I stay here till the end of November."

Along the river from Montmorenci Falls to Point Levi there were frequent artillery fights between the English warships and the French batteries, while bands of Indians infested the outskirts of the English camps, killing and scalping the sentries at every opportunity.

The special duty of the Rangers was to attend to these red devils, and they did it nobly.

Seth was never idle. Had he needed any incitement to diligence and daring in meeting the assaults of the Indians, his admiration for General Wolfe and desire to merit his approval would have supplied it, and it was one of the

proudest moments of his life when, on his return from a dash into the forest which had resulted in the despatching of a dozen Indians, and the taking of half as many prisoners, the General called him before him, and in the presence of his whole staff, said:

"I want to express to you, Lieutenant Allen, my appreciation of the very valuable service you and your Rangers are rendering. My own men know nothing about this forest fighting in which yours are so expert, and I would be well pleased if we had a much larger company of you than we have. When this business is over I will see to it that your excellent work receives due acknowledgment."

Seth heard this praise with heightened colour and throbbing pulses. No sweeter words had ever fallen upon his ears, and he was so moved that he found difficulty in making a brief response expressing his thanks for the commendation, and assuring the general that he would continue to serve him to the utmost of his ability.

Still the days grew into weeks, until autumn drew near without the defence of the city showing signs of weakening. A part of the English fleet had run the gauntlet of the French batteries and reached the upper river, so that the city was now exposed to attack from above and below as well as in front, but the unique strength

of its situation enabled it even then to defy the invaders, who began to despair of accomplishing their object.

At last Wolfe determined upon attempting the desperate expedient of landing a force on the beach above Quebec, scaling the precipitous bluff to the Plains of Abraham, and thence advancing upon the city.

No sooner did this daring design come to Seth's knowledge than he resolved to have a part in the enterprise if he could, and he made haste to secure an interview with the general that he might prefer his request.

He found the great man engrossed in business, and had to wait long before he could obtain his ear, but when he did make known his desire, the kindly smile that lit up the commander's countenance augured well as to the nature of his reply.

"And so you are not content with having thus far escaped the scalping knives of your Indian friends, but hanker for further perils," he said in a bantering tone. "Do you realize what tremendous risks we are taking, and that there is a very good chance of our being cut to pieces, or taken prisoners?"

"That does not trouble me in the least," responded Seth brightly. "I only know that you intend to lead the attacking party yourself, and wherever you go I'm ready to go too."

Rising from his seat General Wolfe stepped up to Seth and laid his hand upon his shoulder, while he said, in a voice that shook with emotion, for he had been greatly depressed of late, and the New England youth's expression of loyal devotion had touched and cheered his heart:

"You're a brave, true lad. I appreciate and honor your noble feelings. You shall go with us."

Seth murmured his thanks and withdrew in a state of high elation. He would not then have changed places with any officer in the whole English army.

When Wolfe had gathered his men, whose total number fell short of five thousand, and the necessary boats and bateaux to transport them from the ships to the shore, he appointed the night for the venture.

On a call being made for volunteers to lead the soldiers up the heights Seth was among the first to respond, and only twenty-four being wanted he was glad to be accepted for the dangerous task.

It was a still dark night when the procession of boats carrying the vanguard of the English, followed by the ships with the remainder, borne on the current, steered silently down the St. Lawrence, and Seth in the foremost boat, sobered by a sense of the tremendous risk, specu-

lated as to the chances of being alive twenty-four hours hence.

"We're bound to lose a good many of our men," he said to himself, "and maybe it will be my turn to fall. I've had a lot of narrow escapes and I suppose I can't count on always being so lucky. Well, there's no telling, and I'm not going to worry about it. I'll just do the best I can, and leave the rest to Providence."

As the boats neared their destination the tide bore them in toward the shore, and suddenly the silence was broken by the sharp "*qui vive*" of a French sentry invisible in the darkness.

Now Seth had put to good use the long months of his captivity at Montreal by acquiring a knowledge of the French language, having noticed what an advantage Major Rogers found his command of it to be, and so with quick wit he responded:

"*France.*"

"*A quel regiment*"*?* the sentry demanded, being not altogether satisfied.

"*De la Reine*," answered Seth, because he knew that this corps was with Bougainville up the river, and the sentry, who was expecting a convoy of provisions from that direction, asked no more awkward questions.

But the danger from this source was not yet over. A little further on another vigilant sentry challenged, and ran down to the water's edge

to get a better look at them. Seth, however, was equal to the occasion.

"Be quiet," he said, in a tone of reproof, "or the English will hear us. We have provisions for the army."

As an English war vessel lay at anchor not very far off the warning seemed well-founded, and the suspicions of the sentry being allayed, he, too, forebore to question further.

A few minutes later the boats rounded the headland above the Anse du Foulon, and were beached on the narrow strand at the foot of the heights.

Seth and his fellow-volunteers at once sprang ashore, and set about climbing the steep, tree-clothed ascent, being closely followed by a number of regulars.

It was a no less difficult than perilous task, and had the French above been on the alert they might easily have foiled the daring attempt, for the climbers could not have defended themselves, seeing that it required all their energies to work their way up.

Seth could not help thinking how easily a stalwart guardsman might drive them back single-handed, and it was with a very decided feeling of relief that at last, breathless and wellnigh spent, he reached the top unchallenged, and saw in the dim light a cluster of tents not far away.

As soon as the others had joined him, and

they had caught their breath, they charged upon the tents, which, strange to say, were without a sentry, and the sleeping inmates, suddenly aroused, made little resistance, the most of them fleeing panic-stricken, while a few were taken prisoners.

Having thus become masters of the position the little band now hurrahed heartily, and the glad sound falling upon the ears of General Wolfe, anxiously waiting below, he at once gave the command for the remainder of the troops to follow, and up they went, some here and some there, clutching at trees and bushes, their muskets strung at their backs.

The general himself was one of the foremost to reach the top, although before starting he said to one of the officers:

"You can try it, but I don't think you'll get up."

By day-break his battalions were drawn up in good order along the crest of the heights, and not being opposed they advanced thence to the Plains of Abraham, and formed their line of battle within a mile of the city.

So utterly unexpected was their appearance that the French were thrown into confusion for a time, and there were orders and counter-orders, misunderstanding, perplexity, and delay until at last Montcalm assumed the responsibility of proceeding to the attack.

Nearly two thousand Canadians and Indians acting as sharp-shooters fusilladed the English in front and flank, and many of their bullets caused gaps in the red lines until the soldiers were ordered to lie down on the grass so as to avoid the deadly fire.

Seth was thoroughly at home in this kind of fighting, and working his way to an advantageous position, he made every shot tell.

It was toward ten o'clock before the main body of the French advanced to the attack. They had formed themselves into three bodies, and they came on rapidly, uttering loud shouts, and firing as soon as they were within range.

Instead of returning the fire the English advanced a few rods, then halted, and stood still and silent until their antagonists were within forty paces of them, when the word of command rang out, and a crash of musketry answered all along the line.

The volley was delivered with remarkable precision, and when the smoke cleared away, its terrible effect was immediately manifest, for the ground was strewn with dead and wounded, while the advancing force had stopped short, and was turned into a frantic mob of shouting, cursing, gesticulating men.

The English commander was quick to see his opportunity and gave the order to charge. Then over the field rose the British cheer mingled

with the fierce yell of the Highland slogan. Some of the corps pushed forward with the bayonet. Others continued to use their muskets, but the Highlanders drew their broadswords and charged furiously, making deadly play with their long, keen, weapons.

Seth, who had kept well to the front through it all, and had done his full share of the fighting, now found himself in close proximity to the general, who was leading the Louisbourg Grenadiers in the charge.

"He is too brave. He should not take such risks. He ought to let his officers do that for him," was the Ranger's comment, as he saw how recklessly Wolfe was exposing himself, for although the courage of it filled him with admiration, his shrewd common-sense told him that the commander-in-chief ought not to be exposed to the same dangers as his subordinates.

But Wolfe had no thought for himself. Victory at any cost, even that of his own life, was his one supreme object, and he pressed onward as though the routing of the enemy depended upon his personal efforts.

Presently a bullet struck him in the wrist, badly shattering it, but he simply wrapped his handkerchief about the wound, and kept on.

Again he was struck, yet still undaunted he continued to advance until a third shot lodged in his breast, and he staggered and sat down.

At once several officers, of whom Seth was one, hastened to his help, and bore him tenderly to the rear, where he begged them to lay him down.

They did so, and Seth asked if he should go in search of a surgeon.

"There's no need," answered Wolfe, in a tone of complete conviction, "it's all over with me."

A moment later Seth having turned to glance at the battle-field, called out, exultantly:

"They run, see how they run!"

"Who run?" Wolfe demanded like a man roused from sleep.

"The enemy, sir," responded Seth. "They're giving way everywhere."

"Go one of you to Colonel Burton," returned the great commander, not forgetting his duty even though his life-blood was fast ebbing, "tell him to march Webb's regiment down to the Charles River to cut off their retreat."

Then turning on his side, while the ghastly pallor of death overspread his features, he murmured:

"Now God be praised, I will die in peace," and passed away.

Profoundly moved Seth stayed by the body of the departed hero, saying to himself:

"What a pity! Why didn't he live to enjoy the glory of his victory! He shouldn't have led the charge. But it's too late now."

Meanwhile the exultant English swept on, driving their panic-stricken opponents before them almost up to the gates of the city through which the fugitives poured pellmell, with their gallant commander Montcalm, mortally wounded, in their midst and supported in his saddle by a soldier on either side.

Wolfe's work was done, and he had paid for it with his own life. With the taking of Quebec the mastery of the continent passed into the hands of the English, and the dominion of the French ceased for all time.

When the joy over the victory and the sorrow over the death of Wolfe had in a measure moderated, a piece of news reached Seth that gave him keen satisfaction, and made him wish that it had been possible for him to be in two places at once.

This was that a strong force under the command of Lord Amherst had succeeded in wresting both Ticonderoga and Crown Point from the enemy, and that the whole region about the beautiful lakes was in possession of the English.

"And can you tell me how are Major Rogers and the Rangers?" Seth eagerly inquired of his informant.

"They're all right, so far as I know," was the satisfactory answer. "They did splendid work all through the campaign."

There being nothing for him to do in Canada

Seth lost no time in rejoining his own leader, whom he found at Albany, enjoying a well-earned rest after his arduous services.

The meeting between the two friends was very cordial, and it took many hours of talk for them to tell each other of their experiences during their long separation.

The conclusion of the war rendering unnecessary the maintenance of the Rangers their commander returned to his more profitable occupation of trading, but Seth had grown too fond of a soldier's life to give it up, and accordingly he sought and obtained a commission in the regular army, where he ultimately rose to high rank by the exercise of those same qualities of self-control, steadfastness, and sagacity which had distinguished him when he was one of Rogers' Rangers.

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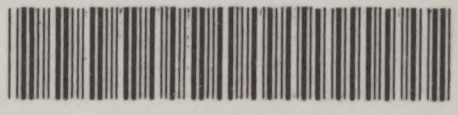

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